



ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

**Testimony of Christina Nelson: HB 5823
Early Childhood Policy Fellow, All Our Kin
Before the Human Services Committee
February 5, 2015**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and the esteemed members of the Committee,

My name is Christina Nelson, and I am a policy fellow at All Our Kin. We are a nationally recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains and supports family child care providers. I'm here today to testify in support of House Bill 5823, An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinated Two-Generational Model.

We at All Our Kin strongly support this bill because, as we see each day in our work, child and parent outcomes are closely intertwined. We wish to emphasize to the committee that a key piece of any two generational approach must be child care that meets the needs of both children and parents.

Our state faces an acute shortage of quality child care for infants and toddlers, and this shortage especially affects low-income communities. Many of our state's youngest children lack the high quality, educational experiences they need to succeed in school and later on in the Connecticut workforce. At the same time, without access to affordable, quality child care, these children's parents struggle to maintain steady employment or to participate in educational programs that would help them move their families out of poverty.

All Our Kin's model of investing in family child care providers has been proven to create lasting results for children, their parents, and for the child care providers we work with, many of whom are parents themselves. All Our Kin is a fundamentally multi-generational program. We expand the supply of child care in the communities that need it most, helping parents find child care options that meet their needs so that they can succeed in the workforce. We help providers increase their earnings and improve their practices as small business owners. Most importantly, we improve the quality of children's experiences in child care programs, investing in them at an age when their brains are vulnerable and developing rapidly.

In our work, we see the challenges that low-income families face in finding high-quality child care for their children, especially infants and toddlers. Parents desperately need affordable child care options that are conveniently located. They need programs that offer care during nontraditional work hours. They need providers who speak their language and match their cultural background. They need to know that their children are in safe, healthy, educational environments so that they can have peace of mind

while they work. At the same time, child care programs must meet the needs of children. Young children need trained caregivers who are responsive, nurturing, and use developmentally appropriate practice, caregivers who can scaffold and support their cognitive, emotional and physical development, who can prepare them to succeed in school and throughout their lives.

For too long, we've seen child care programs that meet either parents' needs or children's needs. Child care providers can do both, but only if the state provides adequate funding, resources, and support. Accessible, high-quality child care across all settings must be a statewide priority in order to prepare both children and parents for lifelong success.

We support the implementation of a coordinated two-generational model in Connecticut, and we urge the committee to consider how essential high-quality child care programs are to families' long-term well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.