CLC

CHILDCARE LEARNING CENTERS

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Before the Human Service Committee

SUPPORT

S.B. No. 1044 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOUPMENT OF STATE COSTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS.

March 12, 2015

Senator Marilyn Moore, Representative Catherine C. Abercrombie, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Marc E. Jaffe. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Childcare Learning Centers ("CLC"), the third largest state funded Pre-K nonprofit in the State of Connecticut. We are located in Stamford operating out of 7 locations and serving predominantly Stamford and to a lesser extent Darien and Greenwich. I am a resident of Old Greenwich.

I am here to speak in support of S.B No. 1044 which should result in increasing salaries for our staff. We have approximately 220 employees, 165 of whom are teaching staff. Although I personally have a longstanding love of public education and a deep respect for educators, (both my mother and sister were teachers and I am a product of the public schools), my perspective on this issue is not so much as a veteran educator but as a business person. I come to Early Childhood Education relatively recently from a career in the private sector running publishing, media and technology companies. I have sat on boards of both public and private companies, for profit and nonprofits.

What is glaringly apparent is that our teachers are literally "the working poor". How they do their job and maintain their equanimity is frankly beyond me. Our program runs 10 hours a day, 51 weeks a year. This allows the parents of our children to work, thus supporting the economy not only of Stamford but of the entire Fairfield county environs.

Unlike other funding requests that come before you requiring Solomonic wisdom, this request comes with a funding mechanism so there is no additional burden on the taxpayers or the budget. I would urge you to support this bill because of the following three simple arguments which I believe are incontrovertible:

1) The work our teachers do: they educate our children ages 0-5, not only take care of them but **educate them**. The achievement gap can be measured as early as 18 months. By the time they are 5 years old, 85-90% of their brain is developed. So you are entrusting our children, our most precious asset, our future at the most formative stage in their human development with people who are grossly underpaid. Prison guards get paid more to watch criminals than our teachers to teach our children. I have to bring in experts in resiliency training because our teachers are stressed with the challenges of making ends meet. When we gave out a $50 holiday bonus in the form of a gift card to a local food market, one of our teachers turned to me and said, "thank you, I can now prepare a proper Christmas dinner for my family".

2) But, as a businessman, a less sentimental argument, the Return on Investment (ROI) in Early Childhood Education is 800 to 1700%. Nothing is comparable. We end up with more productive citizens who will

find better jobs, get paid more and pay more taxes, will be in better health, be less likely to commit crimes or become addicts, less likely to become homeless, all of which cost society less.

3) Lastly, 164 of our 165 teaching staff are women. I dare say, frankly, this issue would not be before you if that was not the case. To the men on this committee, remember who gave birth to you and gave you life. To the women on this committee, it is time to step up and take care of your sisters.

So I urge you to support S.B. No. 1044 so as to increase wages for ECE teaching staff. Thank you