



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Hearing of the Committee on Children Tuesday, February 16th, 2016

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today in support of S.B. 10 – An Act Increasing Access to Child Care for Children Who Are Homeless.

S.B. 10 would change two early childhood policies to ensure children experiencing homelessness, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, have easier access to child care services. Streamlining access for these children to child care would benefit both the children and their parents, and assist the household in exiting homelessness to housing more quickly.

We applaud the Governor for putting this legislation forward. S.B. 10 addresses important issues that now impede our efforts to stabilize the lives of homeless children and to help parents end the homelessness of their families.

More than 1,000 families were homeless in Connecticut last year (2015), with more than 2,000 children as part of these families.

Every year, some 90% of children experiencing homelessness in Connecticut are under 12, and nearly half of all children experiencing homelessness in our state are under the age of five.

S.B. 10 would give the Commissioner of Early Childhood the authority to create a “protective services” category within the Care4Kids child care subsidy program. Care4Kids provides a child care subsidy payment to eligible households.

The child care subsidy serves children birth to age 13. Under Care4Kids, families are eligible for the child care subsidy if they receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), participate in an approved education or training program, or are employed.

Often, families experiencing homelessness lack employment, and the upheaval and unpredictability of homelessness makes it difficult for them to participate in worker training or secure new employment. This policy change to create a “protective services” category means children who are homeless would be “categorially eligible” for the child care subsidy regardless of the parent’s work status.



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S.B. 10 would also create a 90-day grace period for providing documentation of health and immunization records when enrolling in a child care center, group children care home, or family child care home. Licensing statutes require families to provide this documentation before a child can be enrolled. Often, families experiencing homelessness do not have immediate access to these records. This policy change would ensure a child has immediate access to child care services in these settings.

This legislation would benefit both children and parents experiencing homelessness.

Children experiencing homelessness would have immediate access to safe and stable child care – which can be particularly helpful as a stabilizing influence in their young lives during an episode of homelessness, a necessarily stressful time.

For parents, immediate access to childcare means that they can seek employment, participate in job training, search for new permanent housing and complete other necessary tasks to resolve their homelessness and stabilize their family lives.

By helping the parents focus on these critical tasks, S.B. 10 will assist us in resolving each case of family homelessness more quickly. We know that this will benefit our public systems, like schools and emergency rooms, which are often taxed with additional demands when families remain homeless.

Parents who know that their children are safe while they work are more likely to succeed in their careers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important proposed legislation.

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