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

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee. On behalf of the Mystic Area Shelter and Hospitality, serving homeless families in Southeast Ct., I 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.

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

More than 1,000 families were homeless in Connecticut last year (2015), with more than 2,000 children among them.

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 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 make 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.

The children of families who enter our shelter have very little if any interaction with other people. The opportunity to enter a safe and stable childcare program will provide stability during a time of turbulence, as well as enrichment opportunities, including peer socialization.

The benefits for the parents are many as well. With proper childcare, parents are then able to spend the time needed to seek employment and permanent housing. The quicker we are able to rehouse a family, the better their outcome.

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. As part of the stabilization process, this process would be reversed for a family entering a homeless shelter, so that children can be quickly enrolled in childcare, giving parents the time to track down the necessary documents required by licensed child care providers.

We give our full support to S.B. 10. This legislation will help to lessen the impact of homelessness on children and enable the family move quickly out of shelter into permanent stable housing.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Anderson".

Jeffrey J Anderson
Executive Director