

## Testimony on S.B. 10, An Act Increasing Access to Childcare for Children who are Homeless

Thank you to Senator Bartolomeo and Representative Urban and all the members of the Committee on Children for giving us this opportunity to express our support for S.B. 10.

Christian Community Action has provided emergency housing for families with children under age eighteen since our beginnings 49 years ago. We serve an average of 60 families annually in our Hillside Family Shelter. We also provide longer term transitional housing for 18 families through our Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program which was created in 1998. An average of 25 families receive services at Stepping Stone on an annual basis.

Families come to us for a variety of reasons: fires, evictions, little to no income, no housing and/or relational difficulties. With an extreme shortage of affordable housing and far too few family shelters, all of our families come to our facility feeling displaced and traumatized. Far too often, they have lost most of their possessions and accessing important family documents is difficult.

The goal within all of our programs is to offer families case management services to foster the growth and increase the self-sufficiency of each family member. Families move through phases of increased commitments, responsibility and self-sufficiency attending school, training programs and workshops. An employment specialist assists them with job development skills and job placement.

However, few families have relatives or friends that they can depend on to provide consistent, reliable childcare. A protective service category that this Proposed Bill provides would ensure immediate access to child care for all children by creating a 90 day grace period for providing documentation of health and immunization records, giving them the time they need to recreate their family's medical history.

Longer term, it would allow for heads of household in our Programs to achieve greater self-sufficiency; many of them do not have full time jobs or are seeking jobs that pay a living wage. It would make a significant difference for them to receive a Care4Kids child care subsidy so that they can get their GED's, go to college, participate in job training programs, get the skills and the time they need to find livable wage employment.

Short notice, bitter cold weather and school vacations made it difficult for us to bring parents to testify but, we hope that you will pass this important Bill on their behalf.

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