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Testimony for Committee on Children

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the committee:

I am writing this testimony today in support of Senate Bill 10-An Act Increasing Access to Child Care for Children Who are Homeless.

This Senate Bill addresses some important issues that currently cause barriers to the parents of our shelter in their efforts to obtain employment and to resolve their homelessness and to stabilize their family situations. As you may know, each year some 90% of children experiencing homelessness in Connecticut are under the age of 12 and nearly half of all of children experiencing homelessness in our state are under the age of five.

This proposed legislation would give immediate access for our homeless children to safe and stable child care providing a stable environment during a most stressful time for a family living in a shelter. For the parents, it would remove an obstacle that currently exists by allowing for a “protective services” category making these children eligible for the child care subsidy regardless of the parents’ work status. Currently, a parent has to be employed or are participating in an approved education or training program before being eligible for child care subsidy. This is unrealistic in that a parent in a shelter has few options for child care while they seek employment and/or educational opportunities.

This legislation would also create a 90-day grace period for providing documentation of health and immunization records when enrolling in a child care center. It is often difficult for a displaced homeless family to readily access these types of records and it may mean that they need some time in order to locate them.

At the Beth-El Center, we currently have a woman with two small children, without any family support, and is only able to work a few hours a week in a day care situation where she is allowed to bring her two children with her. She needs to be able to work more hours in order to earn a sustainable income, and without a subsidy for child care, is unable to seek other employment.

It is our primary role to provide resources, referrals and support to those families who are living in our shelter. This bill would help to greatly resolve one of the many issues that families face by giving them immediate access to child care so that they can seek employment, participate in job training, search for housing, and work on the goals that they have set to once again have a stable family life and not repeat the cycle of homelessness.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony. If you should have any questions, or should seek additional information, please feel free to contact me directly.

Toni Dolan
Executive Director
Beth-El Center, Inc.