



**Testimony Regarding H.B. 5306: An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood and H.B. 5307 An Act Prohibiting the Unreasonable Delay of Enrolling a Child in Kindergarten**

**Sarah Iverson and Rachel Leventhal-Weiner, Ph.D.**  
Education Committee  
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Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Sarah Iverson and I am an Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children supports **H.B. 5306: An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood and H.B. 5307: An Act Prohibiting the Unreasonable Delay of Enrolling a Child Kindergarten**. Both bills take important steps to reduce socioeconomic disparities in access to high-quality early childhood experiences, and align Connecticut with national early care and education best practices.

**1. Connecticut Voices for Children supports H.B. 5307, which would expand the eligibility requirements for Care 4 Kids, Connecticut's largest child care subsidy program.** By making families with incomes up to 85 percent of the state median income (SMI) eligible for Care 4 Kids, H.B. 5307 would bring Connecticut into compliance with new federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) regulations.<sup>1</sup> On average, the cost of child care in Connecticut is \$13,241 a year, or 43.4 percent of the income of the average single mother in Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> By subsidizing child care costs for low- to moderate-income working families, Care 4 Kids allows many of these families to obtain safe and affordable child care for their children that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

However, in order to ensure that Care 4 Kids can serve families up to 85 percent SMI, as well as the populations it currently serves, the legislature must not simply expand eligibility, but must also expand funding for the program. Without increased funds to support such increased eligibility, new applicants may be denied access to this crucial subsidy program. The Governor proposes to flat fund Care 4 Kids (\$122.1 million) in Fiscal Year 2017, which will not be sufficient to maintain care for all children eligible for the program.

In addition, in these hard budget times we must ensure that expanding Care 4 Kids eligibility does not come at the expense of subsidized child care for our most vulnerable children, who are currently able to access this important child care subsidy. In particular, we must continue to prioritize families on the state's temporary cash assistance (TFA) program who are working, families transitioning off of TFA, teen parents, and other working families with annual incomes less than 50 percent SMI.<sup>3</sup> We must ensure that expanding eligibility to families up to 85 percent SMI will not result in access to Care 4 Kids closing for our neediest families.