



Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

**Testimony of Merrill Gay in favor of SB 321
AN ACT STABILIZING WORKING FAMILIES BY
LIMITING "ON CALL" SHIFT SCHEDULING.**

Children's Committee

March 6th , 2018

Senators Moore and Suzio, Representative Urban, and Members of the Committee: My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of over a hundred organizations ranging from individual childcare programs to statewide research and advocacy organizations. We represent a wide range of organizations that care for, and about, our youngest children.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 321 "An Act Stabilizing Working Families by Limiting "On Call" Scheduling." With the advent of cell phones, and the rise of data analytics, businesses are increasingly using predictive software and "On Call" scheduling to "right size" their labor force based on a host of factors ranging from the weather, to social media buzz about a new product. This practice has grown in retail, foodservice and hospitality. All sectors dominated by big national players.

The flip side of this growing ability of big businesses to achieve new efficiencies in managing their labor costs is the toll that last minute scheduling takes on the employees and their children. When you don't know from day to day whether you are going to work:

- You don't know how much you'll have in your paycheck or if you will be able to pay your bills,
- You don't know what your hours will be so that you could get a second job if you only get part time hours at the first one,
- You can't go back to school to better your employment prospects,
- You can't plan for formal child care. This forces many of these hourly employees to rely on unregulated informal childcare, and
- You can't even do something as simple as make a doctor's appointment for your child with any confidence that you can keep it.

All of that contributes to stress on parents which is not good for children. Children can sense when their caregiver is stressed. It makes the child stressed too. In the earliest years of childhood that stress can actually change the brain chemistry and have long lasting health and learning effects.

Since the Great Recession, Connecticut has largely replaced the high wage jobs that we lost with lower wage hourly jobs. Many in the very sectors that have embraced the practice of “on call” scheduling. So who does this affect? It affects the working poor. The very same families that so many of you went to bat for in order to re-open Care4Kids. Among families with children under five, over a quarter of all working parents and over half of single working parents qualify for Care 4 Kids. Now, not all of those parents are hourly workers, nor do they all work in the sectors that have embraced “on call” scheduling, but many do.

“On call” scheduling makes life for low income working families with young children unduly stressful. When things get this far out of balance, it is time for government to step in and set reasonable standards. The Early Childhood Alliance supports legislation that would focus on the sectors that are using “On Call” scheduling most aggressively. Specifically, retail, foodservice, & hospitality. We want to be clear that it should not cover sectors of the economy where licensing regulations mandate staff to client ratios like child care that need to have the ability to call in substitutes at the last minute to maintain their required ratios.

The bill text that you have before you needs to be changed. Specifically, it should focus on the industries mentioned above, give employees five days not 24 hours advance notice and it should guarantee employees at least eleven hours between shifts.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I hope to continue to working with you to ensure that our youngest children can look forward to a bright future here in Connecticut.