



Hartford Foundation
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Testimony Supporting S.B. 931, An Act Concerning Payments to Child Care Providers

**Education Committee
March 6, 2019**

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit **written testimony in support of Senate Bill 931, An Act Concerning Payments to Child Care Providers.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage, grow, and distribute approximately \$1 billion in assets to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region, particularly in the areas of education, community safety, and community and economic development. Since 1987, we have invested more than \$40 million in early childhood in the Greater Hartford area. It is our goal to ensure that all children, especially those most vulnerable, have access to high-quality early childhood experiences, based on national research that confirms that early childhood experiences are key to children's and families' life-long success. The Foundation has focused on supporting early childhood policy, funding and program quality, recognizing their importance to ensuring optimal safety and learning outcomes for children, and pathways to economic security for their families and caregivers.

The Hartford Foundation supports Senate Bill 931, An Act Concerning Payments to Child Care Providers, which would increase pay for early care and education providers in state-funded programs. The quality of any early care and learning setting is directly related to the quality of the staff, their education and training and understanding of child development, and the ability to translate that understanding through effective practice.

Despite research recognizing the importance of high-quality early education to healthy child development,

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and research that indicates that high quality providers and educators are the single most important factors in these early experiences, too many individuals within the early learning workforce earn low wages – sometimes at or near the federal poverty line – even after they obtain credentials and higher levels of education. **Low pay makes it difficult to attract and retain more experienced staff with higher levels of education to work in early care and education.** This is one reason that the Hartford Foundation has made long-term investments in professional development and training opportunities for early childhood educators – but these investments do not have their desired benefits for young children when the trained providers leave to seek employment in higher-paying sectors.

Evidence shows that when children are enrolled in centers where there is lower turnover and where providers earn higher wages, they spend more time engaged in positive interactions and developmentally appropriate activities with peers and teachers. This contributes to healthy development and school readiness. Staff turnover also undermines continuity of care, such that when providers leave, children’s secure attachments and relationships are interrupted, which can influence their social-emotional and behavioral development. Turnover also affects the morale and culture of programs, which in turn affects the quality of services.

We have testified to this committee in the past about the importance of establishing a floor of adequate support for state-funded programs, in recognition of the fact that providing high-quality early child care services is expensive and requires sustained and consistent investment. **We strongly support increasing provider rates, especially when increases will directly support providing living wages for educators.** The quality and stability of our early care and education depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfpg.org or 860-548-1888.