

Testimony regarding: S.B. No. 934 AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS ENROLLED IN OTHER TYPES OF SCHOOL

Submitted By:
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Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Monica Belyea, and I live in Middletown.

I am honored to be presenting testimony on the issue of S.B. No. 934 AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS ENROLLED IN OTHER TYPES OF SCHOOL.

This is an issue that is very important to me. I currently serve as the program planner for Opportunity Knocks, Middletown's early health and learning initiative, and have been involved with Opportunity Knocks in a variety of capacities for the past 14 years. I also serve as a co-chair for Middletown's School Readiness Council. I believe deeply in the School Readiness program model, a public-private partnership, that offers families choice in their preschool experience and connects providers to the larger community. In our work with the School Readiness program we are also examining the infant/toddler systems for child care and early education experiences and it's a big worry for our community. Where do our families place their young children for care and how does that impact their children's life long trajectory?

Opening enrollment in the Care 4 Kids program to families enrolled in school, makes sense. It allows parents to improve their career prospects. It is a benefit to employers and to the business community to have highly skilled workers. Families can get on a path to success when they have access to education and training. Without child care, education and training is impossible.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut's young children, and requires immediate action. Children should benefit from their parent's access to education and training because that education and training should lead to higher paying or higher quality work. However, if the child is put at risk by being placed in questionable child care, they may be set back, put on a worse trajectory or harmed. Or, the parent may choose not to access education and training that could lift them up because they can't find a child care situation that they trust.

When a parent wants to better themselves by going back to school, for a degree or specific training, they need quality child care options. For the child to benefit from the parent's going

back to school, they need to have an interim caregiver who their parent trusts and who can provide a nurturing and healthy environment.

Opening the Care 4 Kids program to parents who are in school would help our economy by allowing more parents to improve their skills and job qualifications. As with all of the Care 4 Kids bills, for this bill to have the intended affect, it's important that this expansion not limit the overall number of families who can access the program. Two years ago when the program was closed we saw many child care providers close because a significant number of families couldn't afford to pay for care. That closes programs to families who can afford to pay as well. It also sends children into unlicensed child care and unknown situations.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about S.B. No. 934 AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS ENROLLED IN OTHER TYPES OF SCHOOL. Thank you for your consideration.