

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

Submitted By: Julia Hernandez

Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Julia Hernandez, 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 am a single parent of three children under 8 and am currently enrolled in community college and am a graduate of Even Start. I am also living in the United States without legal status. I am very active in my community, but there are limitations because of my status; I don't feel like I can be fully involved. Before I enrolled in Even Start, it was hard to create consistent childcare and make our family situation more stable.

When I began at Even Start, only some of my children could be enrolled because there wasn't enough space for all three. So, I had to stop my education at Even Start until my children got older. Once they started to go to elementary school, it was easier. When I graduated from Even Start only my youngest was enrolled. The program gave me a lot of opportunities to grow as a parent and as a person. We took trips, we spent time with the kids, I learned how to understand my children more.

It was hard for me to start coming at first, but once I started, people were friendly and helpful. I started the GED program and was comfortable leaving my daughter with the teachers. The support I got at Even Start was satisfying and comfortable. It only took me a few months to obtain my GED. But I didn't know what to do next. I enrolled in STEAM Train, a local STEM Education Program, and graduated, but wasn't able to get an internship or job because of my status.

I was able to get a scholarship from Middletown Adult Ed to attend Middlesex Community College for six credits and plan to get my Associate's degree there. I have done other certificate programs as well. My goal is to have a career in computer science and am on my way.

I could have done all of this years earlier if I could have received Care 4 Kids when my children were younger. That was a big barrier. It was life changing being able to come to a school with childcare. Now my biggest barrier is that I can't get a job with all of my new skills because of my status. This is my home, I moved to America when I was ten. I want to be productive and successful here. I want to contribute and help the next generation

If this bill passes, it would change so many lives. People would stop depending on the state for support. People could get degrees and better jobs. Our community would change so much. People have so much to offer, but they are limited in their potential. Our communities are suffering when talented people need to lay low and cannot meet their potential.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut's young children and requires immediate action. If this change is enacted, more people will come together. More people will have education. There will be less violence because people can pursue their dreams. People are choosing the streets because they don't have the opportunity to continue their education. This will bring a better life to the next generation.

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.