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March 6, 2019 Testimony

S.B. No. 931 An Act Concerning Payments To Child Care Providers

S.B. No. 932 An Act Concerning The Staff Qualifications Requirement For Early  
Childhood Educators

S.B. No. 933 An Act Expanding Eligibility For Certain Families In The Care4Kids  
Program

S.B. No. 934 An Act Expanding Eligibility In The Care4Kids Program To Parents  
Enrolled In Other Types of School

S.B. No. 935 An Act Requiring The Office Of Early Childhood To Develop An Early  
Childhood Educator Compensation Schedule

S.B. No. 937 An Act Concerning A Student Loan Forgiveness Program For Early  
Childhood Educators

Hi, my name is Jacqueline Valle and I reside in Bridgeport. I have worked in the early childhood field for last 23 years. I am the program Lead Teacher at Honey Bear Learning Center in Stratford, a CT School Readiness and accredited program.

As an early childhood professional and single parent of two boys, I have struggled to make ends meet at times because the wages for early childhood educators is so low. This issue is not just a personal one, but affects many early childhood professionals across the state. I oversee a group of 10 teaching staff and I have been made aware of their personal struggles with making the State and NAEYC education and training deadlines. Sadly, the current wages do not even begin to

cover the large student bills that these mandates force on our teachers. Some are receiving scholarship assistance but others are taking out personal student loans in order to meet the requirements that will allow them to continue working in the field that they love so much. These loans then put them in a tough financial predicament because they will not make a large enough salary upon graduating to pay the monthly bill on those loans. Some programs are able to keep their most dedicated teachers because they buy into the centers philosophy and stay because of their passion of providing children with a great-high quality experience. But our teachers deserve more than that, they deserve to be fairly compensated for a position that is asking them to have an expensive and specialized degree in order to do it.

In order for us to give them that compensation, we desperately NEED Care 4 Kids and School Readiness to increase their payments to providers. This will allow program directors to pass that income on to teaching staff, providing them with a more livable wage.

At age 27, I was pursuing my early childhood degree with a six month old and a three year old, while employed full time at a Preschool here in CT. Care4Kids was an active program at the time but like now, they do not provide compensation to families who attend higher education unless they are taking CT Works classes during the times of child care. My employer forced me to attend higher education and said I would be demoted or cut my hours to part time if I had to withdraw from school. This forced me to pay a babysitter to stay with my young children while I was in class three days a week. This proposal will allow families to break the cycle of poverty and earn their education without additional financial stress in order to earn a higher income and provide the opportunities to their children that all of us, as parents, wish to do. Coupled with the acceptance of middle class families who fall between the 50% and 70% State Median Income can receive the assistance they truly need. As an administrator I speak to and review potential Care4Kids eligibility with between 10-15 families each week. More than half of these families are making wages above threshold but still fall significantly short of being able to sustain a roof over one's head, never mind food, clothing, and

everyday supplies. Expanding Care4Kids to accept families who make between 50-70% will help to close the gap in ability to attend child care that our middle class is currently experiencing.

I want to thank the education committee for allowing me to speak today. As a mother of 2 and an early childhood professional I take great pride in the opportunity given to me to express a long standing issue that I have watched hundreds of families and inspirational teaching staff struggle with over the last 23 years.

In closing, I leave you with this quote from Michael Gove. Sincerely yours,  
Jacqueline Valle

***“The single most important thing in a child’s performance is the quality of the teacher. Making sure a child spends the maximum amount of time with inspirational teachers is the most important thing.”***