

**Testimony Re:** Bills relating to Education, S.B.-931, S.B.-935, S.B.-937, S.B.-932, S.B.-930, S.B.-933, S.B.-934

**Education Committee – March 6, 2019**

**David Kulick, Co-president of Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children**

Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC) strongly supports the seven Child Care/Early Childhood bills being heard today, all of which would support families who are moving up the economic ladder and children who benefit when enrolled in a high-quality early learning program through the availability of a child care subsidy and increased compensation for the workforce who teach them.

**S.B. No. 931--AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENTS TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**, to require Care4Kids program payments to be at least equal to the seventy-fifth percentile of the market cost of child care; to require that any increase in funding to child care centers and school readiness program providers are to be used for increasing educator salaries; and to reestablish school readiness grant rates in the general statutes and to increase such rates.

Since 2002 there has been only a 3% increase in C4K payment rates. There has been a 39.6% increase in inflation since 2002. Minimum wage has increased 57%, from \$6.70 in 2002 to \$10.10 in 2019.

CTAEYC supports increased payments to providers by 1) increasing Care4Kids reimbursements to 75th percentile of market rate; 2) increasing payments to school readiness and state-funded center programs by \$1,000 per kid, and 3) requiring that those additional funds increase wages for classroom staff.

**S.B. No. 935 -- AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE**, to require the Office of Early Childhood to develop an early childhood educator compensation schedule and for early childhood program providers to implement such compensation schedule. CTAEYC strongly supports increased compensation for the ECE workforce. In order to deliver high-quality learning environments where children thrive, early childhood teachers need to receive wages that compensate and reflect their hard work and efforts, and not what they could be making at a fast food restaurant. CTAEYC strongly supports increased compensation for ECE professionals BECAUSE of their skill, competency, the work they do, and not simply just for their love for the kids.

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**S.B. No. 937** -- AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, to establish a student loan forgiveness program for early childhood educators. Financial relief initiatives like loan forgiveness are an interim strategy, not a long-term solution to achieve appropriate wages and benefits. However, as we work toward greater parity and a pay compensation schedule for early educators, loan forgiveness can improve the recruitment and retention of credentialed, high-quality early educators. CTAEYC supports creating a loan forgiveness program for early childhood educators to reward credentialed staff and incentivize increased educational attainment, recruitment, and retention of skilled early childhood teachers who may otherwise struggle to pay for student loans incurred while pursuing higher education. Loan forgiveness for those with salaries below \$50K, up to \$5K of loan forgiveness per year for up to 10 years (\$50K total eligible for forgiveness)

**S.B. No. 932** -- AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, to make revisions to and extend the dates of the staff qualifications requirement for early childhood educators. The current stated requirements for education do not coincide with the financial compensation teachers receive in early childhood positions. With the required bachelor's degree, many teachers still make roughly \$30,000 per year. For providers, this means many struggle to hire and retain quality teachers in the field that has such low compensation rates. CTAEYC supports pushing back the 2019 staff qualifications requirement for early childhood providers to allow additional factors such as compensation and scholarship availability to improve in the field. By 2022, 100% of teachers must have Associates, by 2025 50% Associates 50% Bachelors, and by 2029 100% with Bachelor's degrees.

**S.B. No. 930** -- AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODEL, to establish a pilot program that authorizes the Commissioner of Early Childhood to issue a license to a person or group of persons to operate a family child care home or group child care home in a space that is not a private home and which has been provided by an association, organization, corporation, institution or agency. This would allow people to start early childhood businesses in homes (rentals), who would like to find business incubator where each "home daycare" provider would abide by home provider rules in an incubator/shared space setting. CTAEYC supports a time limited pilot, allowing home day care providers to be licensed while being housed out of a business incubator shared space.

**S.B. No. 933** -- AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM, to expand the eligibility of the Care4Kids program to include families with a gross income of up to seventy-five per cent of the statewide median income and require advance notice of expanded program eligibility. Quality early care and education is critical for the healthy development of young children and the ability of parents to participate fully in the workforce. However, without the

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Care4Kids subsidy, child care can be too expensive for many families. According to the United Way's report on Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) families, a family of four with two young children needs to earn \$78,984 annually just to barely meet a minimum survival budget. Child care can easily represent the single largest expense for low-income working families; in 2016, the average annual cost of child care was \$19,521, or 28 percent of the median household income for a family of four in 2016. However, at 50% of SMI, the current Care4Kids income limit for a family of four is \$56,275, well below the income threshold of many ALICE families who still struggle to pay for care. For parents to fully participate in the workforce, and for children to engage in the critical early learning experiences needed for healthy development, we must expand the income eligibility of Care4Kids to enable more low-income families to access Care4Kids.

CTAEYC supports allowing home day care providers associated with this limited pilot project to be licensed in the incubator setting.

**S.B. No. 934 -- AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS ENROLLED IN OTHER TYPES OF SCHOOL**, to expand eligibility in the Care4Kids program to parents who are enrolled in school, in addition to high school, and require advance notice of expanded program eligibility. Over the next 10 years, an estimated 70 percent of Connecticut jobs will require postsecondary education or specialized training. Currently 8.5% of adults 18-64 do not have a high school degree/GED, and only 26.3% have only a high school degree. Helping parents looking to access educational opportunities will be beneficial for the growing needs of the Connecticut workforce. CTAEYC supports expanding the eligibility in the Care4Kids Program to include parents who are enrolled in school, which would include English Learning, GED, job training, and Higher Education.

High-quality, affordable, and consistent early childhood education and care with compensated teachers is important for Connecticut's short and long-term economy because it helps parents maintain employment and supports young children's cognitive and emotional development, thereby helping to build skills in tomorrow's workforce.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony.