

Education Committee
Public Hearing March 6, 2019

S.B. 930 An Act Concerning The Creation of a Pilot Program for an Early Childhood Business Incubator Model,

S.B. 931 An Act Concerning Payments to Child Care Providers,

S.B. 932 An Act Concerning The Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Educators,

S.B. 933 An Act Expanding Eligibility for Certain Families in the Care4Kids Program,

S.B. 934 An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program to Parents Enrolled in Other Types of School,

S.B. 935 An Act Requiring the Office of Early Childhood to Develop an Early Childhood Educator Compensation Schedule,

S.B. 936 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office Of Early Childhood,

S.B. 937 An Act Concerning A Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Early Childhood Educators,

Senator McCarty, Senator Berthel, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Edie Reichard and I am the Director of Sleeping Giant Day Care, Inc. and the co-chair of the CDC Director's Forum (formerly known as the State Funded Director's Forum), a statewide network of 103 child development centers serving over 4,000 infants, toddlers, and 3 & 4 year old children. These centers were established in 1968 by state statute to provide high quality child care for low income working families. As small businesses, we support a workforce of over 15,000 teachers and ancillary staff. We are a critical component of the early care and education system in Connecticut and overall economy of the state.

I am submitting testimony in support of the Early Childhood bills raised today to address teacher compensation, tuition forgiveness and expansion of Care4Kids eligibility and reimbursement rates. I have been a Director of a State Funded Child Development Center for 15 years and I appreciate the Education Committee's concern and commitment to early care and education for families and children.

All of the bills before you should be viewed as a package to sustain and fairly compensate teachers in the early childhood field who serve over 244,000 children.

SB 931 I am concerned about the future of the Early Care and Education field because we have a hard time getting qualified degreed staff to fill openings. If we do get staff they do not stay with us long term as we cannot pay them a wage commensurate with the college degrees they hold. Therefore as soon as positions open in the public schools these teachers apply for those positions

and leave us and we are back to square one trying to get staff. The last time one of my teacher left it took many months to replace that teacher and instead of getting a teacher with a Bachelor's degree I had to hire one with an Associate degree. That teacher then needed time off several days each week to attend classes to get her Bachelor's degree. She now has her Bachelor's degree and we cannot afford to increase her hourly pay rate. She is currently looking for a teaching job in the public schools. So we will be starting the process all over again. This is why we are asking for an increase in Care4Kids and also our state reimbursement rate for State Funded Child Development Centers (CDCs) and School Readiness. I would ask that the State reimbursement rate be raised \$1000.00 per child per year for State Funded CDCs and School Readiness. This increase will help us pay teachers more and allow them to continue to work for our centers long term.

SB 932 I would ask that there be revisions made to and the dates extended for staff qualifications requirements for Early Childhood Educators in state funded programs. I would like to see extensions to: 2022 for Associates degrees, 2025 for 50% Associates 50% Bachelors and 2029 for 100% Bachelor's degrees. As stated in **SB 931** we have trouble finding qualified degreed staff and this mandate makes it even harder for us to hire staff. Setting the dates back would help us to hire staff.

SB 933 I believe the Care4Kids eligibility needs to be increased from 50% state medium income to 75% state medium income to allow more families to qualify for this subsidy and to help them with the high cost of care. I have a couple families who just miss the 50% state medium income level needed to receive Care4Kids. They struggle every week to pay the sliding fees scale payments. One pays \$55.00 per week and the other family pays \$79.00 per week. If the level were raised to the 75% state medium income they would qualify for Care4Kids and not need to worry as much about being able to pay their tuition every week.

SB 934 I would also ask that Care4Kids be open to parents enrolled in higher education programs. It is currently for working families. However, to be one of those working families, parents need to become educated at higher education institutions and while they are getting their degrees they need childcare and should qualify for the Care4Kids program.

SB 935 I would ask that the OCE develop an early childhood educator compensation schedule and for early childhood program providers to implement such compensation schedule. However to do this, we would need to have funding increased as mentioned in **SB 931**.

SB 937 I would also ask that you look into loan forgiveness for Early Childhood Educators. I would like to see this forgiveness for those educators making a salary below \$50,000. It would be \$5,000.00 of loan forgiveness per year for up to 10 years. This would be a total of \$50,000.00 of loan forgiveness. If Early Childhood Educators had their loans forgiven they should be able to work for

us and pay their mortgages, bills, children's education cost and more without having to have the constant worry of a monthly college loan payment. My teachers who have left to earn more money all tell me they love their job but cannot afford to live on the pay we can afford to pay them. If we could pay them more they would come back.

I support this package of early childhood legislation in order to appropriately compensate teachers in publically funded programs that must meet NAEYC accreditation program standards and have Bachelor Degrees by 2020.

Given the disparity among publically funded early care and education programs including Magnate Schools, Charter Schools, Smart Start, Head Start, School Readiness, and State Funded Child Development Centers: it is imperative for the OEC to review and make recommendations for parity among all programs based on objective criterion. Currently programs which have the same mandated requirements receive different payment amounts and this needs to be rectified.

Adequate funding for early care and education in all settings will support small businesses, compensate teachers with fair and equitable wages, and improve outcomes for children and working families.

Thank you for reading my testimony,

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