
I am honored to be presenting testimony on the issue of S.B. No. 933  AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM.

This is an issue that is very important to me. I am currently studying at the University of Connecticut in the Early Childhood Development and Education program on the path to become an infant/toddler teacher. I am doing my fieldwork experience at our on-campus Child Development Labs in one of the preschool classrooms under the supervision of 2 trained professionals. Compared to the various childcare centers I have worked at for the past 7 years, I have seen a spectrum of quality centers. Along with taking an advocacy course specifically for early childhood, working in the Child Labs this past year has opened my eyes to recognize what true quality early childhood education and care looks like. There are many working families around the state of Connecticut who do not have the financial ability to provide their children with such an enriching experience.

Children who do not have the opportunity to receive high-quality care during their early childhoods, they are at a severe disadvantage during later life, when they start school and entering into the workforce in adulthood. Childcare is the largest expense low-income working families have and puts this large population of families at a struggle to meet a survival budget. Due to this issue, many families contemplate on where they should bring their children: stay at home with them or a relative, be in financial hardship by sending them to licensed child care or send them to unregulated care. Parents are stuck in this ongoing cycle of uncertainty. Care4Kids is currently too expensive for many low-income working families to afford because the childcare providers are not being paid enough, resulting in the parents having to pay the salary difference. Only 27% of 111K infants/toddlers in Connecticut are able to be supported in licensed child care and only 5% are enrolled in Care4Kids.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut’s young children, and requires immediate action. Quality early care and education programs are essential for children to learn new skills in all domains of development. The first 3 years of a child's life is
when the most learning occurs. This time is especially important in terms of development and shaping of children's future. With this policy change, more children will be able to receive high-quality care from trained professionals in early child development. Currently, 44.5% of families at or below 200% of Federal Poverty level; the passing of this policy change will lead to a strong decline in families struggling. There will be less family stress and have less worry about making ends meet. Fewer parents would not be concerned that their children are not in safe hands. Parents will be able to focus on their careers, work and education; this has become increasingly important because 70% of jobs in Connecticut will soon require postsecondary education or specialized training. The future of the economy is dependent on today's children, which all starts with quality early childcare.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about S.B. No. 933 AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM. Thank you for your consideration.