Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jill Marini, and I live in Marlborough.

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 the Regional Director with oversight of five Early Learning Centers and eight Before and After Schools and we constantly receive calls from families requesting subsidized care spaces.

Currently in two of our centers eighty-five percent of the families enrolled have income that falls with the below the ALICE threshold, with the phone ringing off the hook on a daily basis with families who make slightly more than the cut off for Care 4 Kids requesting spaces that offer subsidy to assist them in obtaining quality child care. Unfortunately, all we can do for those families is put them on the wait list. In these two particular centers we have twenty full pay spaces that we cannot fill at all because families make too much to receive Care 4 Kids, but cannot possibly afford the cost of child care. These families will either choose not to work or leave their children with unlicensed care providers who may not provide the same safe, healthy high quality child care that a licensed center would.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut’s young children, and requires immediate action. The impact of a win would allow families to obtain affordable high quality care and still provide for the basic necessities for their family. The average cost of child care for childcare in 2016 was $19,521, or 28 percent of the median household income for a family of four in 2016. How does a family afford to live on the remaining income for the year? If working causes them to remain in poverty, why work at all? If they choose to continue working, they often find unlicensed care for their children, this results in the loss of quality early childhood experiences for children. The loss of quality early childhood experiences for this particular demographic in the long run is just as detrimental as the loss of income and work for the families. The foundation of early learning is laid in the early developmental years and not only prepares them to enter school, but its affects can be seen
through at least fourth grade reading results. Without these experiences, these children enter school unprepared.

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