
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 have been a Program Director for over 30 years. I have recommended parents who qualify to apply to Care 4 Kids especially our infant/toddler parents. Infant/Toddler care costs more in tuition for parents due to the ratio of 1 teacher to 4 children. During the past years, parents were able to afford the difference of the family fee plus the cost of weekly tuition. In the past 2 years, as tuition costs have risen and the eligibility rates have changed, the parents are squeezed out of quality care. They are forced to go to unlicensed care by friends of friends or family members. This is forcing parents to make choices that they are not comfortable with and taking away the opportunity for their child to have a "critical early learning experience needed for healthy development." This is especially critical for children in the critical time for healthy brain development. This bill to expand the eligibility to include families with a gross income of up to seventy-five percent of the statewide median income is crucial based on the fact infant/toddler child care is easily the largest expense for low income working families.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut’s young children and requires immediate action. A win for this policy change is that parents will have choice of quality care for their under 3 year old children. School readiness is open to the over 3 population and to all incomes. They do have to pay a family fee based on income. The under 3 population does not have the same choice. They are bound by income constraints of 50% of SMI. The annual average cost of child care in 2016 was $19,521 or 28% of the median household income for a family of four in 2016. 50% of SMI, the current Care4Kids income limit for a family of 4 is $56,275 well below the income threshold of many ALICE families who are struggling to pay for child care. It was calculated by ALICE they would have to earn (family of 4 with 2 young children) $78,984 annually to just barely met a minimum survival budget. (United Way) If that is the case, the family would exceed the 50% SMI and not be eligible. This
risks their ability to work without anxiety and have their children enrolled in quality early care and education.

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.