Joint Favorable Report

Bill No.: SB-931  
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENTS TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.  
Vote Date: 3/15/2019  
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations  
PH Date: 3/6/2019  

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
To require Care4Kids programs to be at least equal to seventy-five percent of the market cost of childcare, any increase in funding to childcare centers and school readiness program providers to be used for increasing educators salaries, to reestablish school readiness grant rates in general statutes, and to increase such rates.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Commissioner, Beth Bye, State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood:
Commissioner Bye supports this bill. Commissioner Bye states that raising Care4Kids rates is a long term goal. The Office of Early Childhood put forth a Child Care Development Plan which would advocate for Care4Kids subsidies to match twenty five perfect of preschool care rates relative to market pricing and subsidies to match fifty percent of infant care rates relative to market pricing. The Office of Early Childhood is committed to increase subsidies rates to meet the federal recommendation of seventy-five percent of market pricing.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Representative, Tim Ackert:
Rep. Ackert supports this bill. Care4Kids is an essential service for Early Childhood Education. The wages of ECE teachers have only risen by 3% since 2002 and minimum wage has increased by 57%. When teachers are underfunded through Care4Kids the tuition expenses fall on the parents who need help paying for childhood service the most. It is appropriate to increase Care4Kids subsidies.
Executive Director, Merrill Gay, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance:
Director Gay supports this bill. Director Gay claims that center based childhood providers payments are not raising proportionally with the minimum wage and that difference is made up by raising tuition on families. Connecticut pays its early childhood educators lower than the national average. Pay increases for early education providers would cost eleven million dollars and would affect eleven thousand workers. Many teachers are leaving the field of early education because they are not paid enough.

Executive Director, Subira Gordon, ConnCAN:
Director Gordon supports this bill. Director Gordon claims that reading milestones should be met by third grade. If early education does not get children started on reaching academic milestones the risk of not meeting those benchmarks on time increases the chance a child will be disadvantaged for the rest of their lives. The average early childhood educator makes less than the state’s average living wage. Loan forgiveness for early childhood educators should become a part of the conversation.

Director, Izzi Greenberg, Middlesex Coalition for Children:
Director Greenberg supports this bill. Director Greenberg requests Care4Kids be indexed to match increases in the minimum wage. Early educations make roughly thirty thousand dollars and year which is much lower than the value they have in society, therefore we should increase their pay to better reflect said value. The most important brain development in a child happens between birth and kindergarten.

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving:
The Hartford Foundation supports this bill. The Hartford Foundation claims that the quality of care is directly related to quality of the child care staff and the quality of the childcare staff is directly related to how much the staff is paid. Therefore, how much a child care staff is paid is related to quality of child care. Low wages and non-livable wages lead to high turnover rates at Early Childhood Education centers which disrupt the social continuity between the children and their educators. Quality and continuous childcare can be accomplished if early childhood educators make higher wages.

Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC):
CTAEYC supports this bill. Care4Kids payment must be made equal to seventy-five percent of the market price of child care, payments to state funded child care centers must be increased by one thousand dollars a child, and these additional subsidies must go to increased wages for classroom staff.

Regional Vice President, Steffi Martinez, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:
Ms. Martinez supports this bill. Ms. Martinez serves six families in her child care home. A child’s brain develops eighty percent in the first three years of their lives. Without pay increases it may be hard to stay in business.

Director, Edie Richard, Sleeping Giant Day Care Inc.:
Director Richard supports this bill. Early Childhood Education centers are losing teachers because they leave to work at public schools. It is difficult to recruit and retain any early childhood educators because their wages are so low and their training is exportable to jobs in a similar field. There is a disconnection between the requirement for educators to have a BA and the amount they are paid.
Executive Director, Carol Smith, Margaret C. Griffin Child Development Center of Southington, Inc.:
Director Smith supports this bill. Director Smith states that early education centers will be in trouble unless early childhood educators are paid comparably to public school teachers. Research shows that the continuity of relationships between early childhood educators is positively correlated with child development.

Ph. D., Wendy Waithe Simmons, Connecticut Voices for Children:
Dr. Wendy Waithe Simmons supports this bill. Low compensation rates lead to low retention rates. Retaining early childhood educators with a BA will make positive impact in child development, but the mandate for educators to have a BA must be in congruence with wage increases.

Policy Associate, Natalie Vieira, All Our Kin:
Ms. Vieira supports this bill. Connecticut is facing an acute shortage of licensed early child care. Connecticut needs fifty-one thousand infant and toddler early education slots. Infant and toddler care is may be too expensive for some parents without further Care4Kids Childcare is especially important for families working nontraditional hours and families lacking access to transportation.

Executive Director, John L. Cattelan, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs:
Director Cattelan supports this bill. In the past seventeen years the YMCA only experienced one increase of three percent but the minimum wage and inflation have both increased by fifty percent. If the minimum wage increases again and paid medical family leave passes then the YMCA will have to increase childcare tuition. The average cost of child care is nineteen thousand five hundred twenty one dollars a year which represents twenty eight percent of the median household income. The state is making child care more and more unaffordable. Without a rate increase to Care4Kids, the YMCA will no longer be able to accept some kids who receive Care4Kids in their summer camps.

Executive Director, Co-Chair, Mary Cecchinato, Torrington Child Care Center, State Funded Directors Forum:
Ms. Cecchinato supports this bill. Turnover is so bad that some classrooms get a new early education provider every three months. Early education teachers start between thirteen and fourteen dollars an hour, but one can start with nineteen dollars an hour working at the local pet store. Early educators need more money so that attaining a BA for the purpose of becoming an early childhood educator is practical.

KinderCare Education:
KinderCare Education supports this bill. KinderCare Education requests that the language in this bill be broadened so that funds appropriated to them can be used for things involving childcare beyond educator salaries such as facility maintenance and curricular improvements. KinderCare supports the goal to have Care4Kids payments rates to be seventy-five percent of market price.

Stacey Zimmerman SEIU CT State Council:
Mr. Zimmerman supports this bill. Mr. Zimmerman reiterates SEIU’s commitment to quality and equitable child care. Mr. Zimmerman requests that the Committee revisit Connecticut’s
contract with Connecticut United Way and their involvement in Care4Kids subsidies. Two thousand three hundred workers have missed their paychecks under the state’s contract with United Way Connecticut.


These stakeholders support this bill. These stakeholders’ testimony underlines the positive relationship between quality childcare and lifelong success trajectories for children. The lack of subsidy increases tied to inflation and cost of living increase through Care4Kids have put child care providers in a precarious fiscal situation. Care4Kids is necessary for paying early childhood educators enough to retain quality. These stakeholders request that this bill passes so that Care4Kids subsidies increase to ensure quality and equity in early child care.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None.

Reported by:  Colin Carroll                     Date: 3/18/2019