Bill No.: SB-933
Title: AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM.
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 expand the eligibility of the Care4Kids program to include families with a gross income of up to seventy-five percent of the state-wide median income and require advance notice of expanded program eligibility.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
The Office of the Child Advocate for the State of Connecticut (OCA):
OCA supports this bill. OCA wants lawmakers to expand quality childcare for low-income families. OCA has concerns with parents receiving child care from unlicensed child care providers for health and safety reasons. OCA cites horrific stories of infant and toddler deaths caused from unlicensed child care providers. Providing quality childcare to families would prevent the health and safety hazards of unlicensed child care providers.

Commissioner, Beth Bye, State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood:
Commissioner Bye supports the intent of this bill but opposes its passing. Commissioner Bye states that this bill would make Care4Kids apply to ALICE families (Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed). Current appropriation would not support this bill and the consequence may be that fewer families would be served by Care4Kids.

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.

**Director, Izzi Greenberg, Middlesex Coalition for Children:**
Director Greenberg supports this bill. Without the Care4Kids subsidy, child care is too expensive for families earning under seventy-eight thousand nine hundred eighty four. Families making the fifty percent median income threshold need to spend twenty-eight percent of their budget on child care. ALICE families struggle to pay childcare and need Care4Kids expansion.

**Executive Director, Mary Cecchinato, Torrington Child Care Center:**
Director Cecchinato supports this bill. Director Cecchinato states that families right above the cusp of the fifty percent eligibility threshold for Care4Kids such as being fifty-three percent of the state median income would benefit most from the passing of this bill.

**Public Policy Intern, Samantha Bell, The Alliance Voice of Community Nonprofits:**
Ms. Bell supports this bill. Ms. Bell states that many families have to cut hours at work or work overtime, but expanding childcare subsidies would allow parents to spend their money on other things such as medicine, rent, and work development.

**Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (CECFC):**
CECFC supports this bill. CECFC cites two national studies by business associations in regards to this bill. The first study, The Committee for Economic Development of the Conference Board published “Child Care in State Economies: 2019 Update”. The second study, Ready Nation published “Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis”. CECF argues that Connecticut are especially fitted for the expansion of child care subsidies and, with the concept of economic opportunity cost in mind, it would be economically beneficial to fund and expand Care4Kids subsidies.

**Executive Director, Merrill Gay, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance:**
Director Gay supports this bill. Director Gay states that the costs of childcare punish ALICE families that do not qualify for Care4Kids subsidies. What is needed to bridge the gap between families who are at the middle moderate income range of qualification for Care4Kids compared to a family who can afford Care4Kids without subsidies equates to an extra eleven dollars and ten cents an hour.

**Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF):**
CWEALF supports this bill. CWEALF states that child care is still unaffordable for families just above the threshold for qualification in the Care4Kids subsidy program. Child care can amount to nineteen thousand dollars a year and twenty-eight percent of the budget of a median household income. Woman still do most of the caregiving and the inability to pay for childcare disproportionately affects women. The cost of childcare forces women to either cut hours at their job to provide childcare themselves or take on more hours at work in order to make ends meet in order to pay for childcare.

**KinderCare Education:**
KinderCare Education supports this bill. Connecticut wages are high so many families do not qualify for Care4Kids, but still struggle to pay for quality child care. This bill would benefit working families.

**Steffi Martinez, CSEA SEIU Local 2001:**
Ms. Martinez supports this bill. Ms. Martinez gives an account of her experience as a childcare provider. Eighty percent of a child’s brain develops in the first three years of life. Care4Kids should be properly funded, and working families need access to quality child care.

**Elizabeth Fraser, Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS):**
Ms. Fraser supports this bill. Early child care is critical in child brain development. The average cost of early childhood care is twenty thousand two hundred ninety-two dollars a year and costs twenty eight percent of the median household earnings. ALICE families do not qualify for Care4Kids subsidies, but they still have serious budgetary problems affording it. Some parents are not going to work because child care costs are so high. If ALICE families receive assistance they can work more and save up more money which to go into the local economy.

**Director, Edie Reichard, Sleeping Giant Day Care Inc.:**
Director Reichard supports this bill. Director Reichard states that families above the current fifty percent threshold of Care4Kids subsidies pay between fifty-five to seventy-nine dollars a week. Those families could use Care4Kids subsidies.

**Executive Director, Carol Smith, Margaret C. Griffin Child Development Center of Southington Inc.:**
Director Smith supports this bill. Director Smith states that families under the seventy-five percent of the median income need Care4Kids subsidies so that parents can afford quality child care.

**Policy Associate, Natalie Vieria, All Our Kin:**
Ms. Vieria supports this bill. Ms. Vieria states that, due to Connecticut’s high child care costs, Care4Kids for most families is the only vehicle for families to afford childcare and therefore should be properly funded and expanded.

**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.

**Co-President, David Kulick, Connecticut Association of the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC):**
CTAEYC supports this bill. CTAEYC states that without subsidies childcare is too expensive for ‘ALICE’ families, otherwise known as Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed families. The limit for a family of four to qualify for Kids4Care is fifty-six thousand two hundred seventy-five dollars a year. In order for a similar family to be able to afford child care without subsidies they must make seventy-eight thousand nine hundred eighty four dollars a year. In short, Care4Kids should serve all families that cannot afford it.
Sasha Bennett, Keisha Griffiths, Rachel Ho, Tara Hunt, Jill Marini, Marie Monahan, Shannon Park, Wanda Sanabria, Jacqueline Valle, Catherine Vanicky, Sarah Willsey

These stakeholders support this bill. These stakeholders state that the cost of child care is tremendous in Connecticut. Parents who are above the cut off of Care4Kids qualification still have trouble making ends meet with childcare. With Care4Kids being the only method of receiving child care relief, these stakeholders request that this bill pass.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None.

Reported by: Colin Carroll                  Date: 3/18/19