

Education Public Hearing

Friday March 6, 2020

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and Members of the Committee; I am testifying today in favor of several bills aimed at addressing the child care needs of parents enrolled in secondary education and parents with children who are homeless living in shelters.

My name is Mary Cecchinato and I am the Executive Director of the Torrington Child Care Center, Inc, and Co-Chair of the State Funded Child Care Center Director's Forum representing 102 early care and education child care centers (CDC's) in Connecticut. CDC's have provided high quality, affordable early care and education to over 4,300 children in 53 municipalities since 1968.

Support Raised Bill No. 5220 "An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program to Parents Participating in An Even Start Program or Enrolled in Certain Secondary Education Programs," is a critical policy decision that will break down barriers for parents to obtain higher education degrees and follow career paths to higher wage jobs. This is not a new issue facing low income families in Connecticut. Advocates for years have fought for expansion of childcare -the number one reason families stay in poverty! Connecticut needs highly skilled workers and workers need high quality childcare weather in the work force or in secondary education programs. This policy change is long overdue and aligns with investments in transportation and education to build a strong Connecticut economy.

Support Raised Bill 5222, "An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program for Homeless Families," will address a need in the services to homeless families. Currently, families with children living in shelters do not have access to quality childcare which makes it impossible to look for jobs or enroll in job training programs. The average stay in a shelter is 90 days, but homeless families stay much longer because the system does not provide any help with childcare. Connecting this most vulnerable population to childcare services will help break the cycle of poverty and provide children with a safe, enriching programs to offset the trauma of living in a shelter. **It's important to understand that the state**

must increase investment in childcare to allow for any expansion of eligibility to these categories!!

Support Raised Bill No. 5213 AAC The Creation of “ A Pilot Program for An Early Childhood Business Incubator.” This bill would break down facility barriers to entrepreneurs who want to open childcare businesses, but who do not own their own home. The bill offers licenses to a person or groups of persons to operate a family childcare home in a space that is not a private home that is provided by an association; organization; corporations; institution or agency. Expanding this opportunity to open license family childcare programs outside of private homes will leverage existing spaces in organizations and help meet the demand for much needed child care programs. Imagine how wonderful it would be if space in homeless shelters could be used to open family child care programs to serve the children living in shelters. This could be a win - win for new business owners, parents and organizations serving working families.

I appreciate your willingness to raise these important policies that will help working families and address systemic barriers to education and job training opportunities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Mary Cecchinato

Torrington Child Care Center Inc.

338 Kennedy Drive, Torrington CT 06790