



TESTIMONY OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5222: AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES
FRIDAY, MARCH 6TH, 2020

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Good morning, Senator McCrory, Senator Berthel, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty and honorable members of the Education Committee, my name is Kiley Gosselin and I'm the Executive Director at the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC). We are a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. PSC staffs and manages the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to end homelessness in Connecticut.

I'm here to testify in strong support of **House Bill 5222, An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program for Homeless Families**. This bill seeks to expand eligibility in the Care for Kids Program to families with a parent or caretaker who meet category 1 (literally homeless) or category 4 (fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence) of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development definition of homeless, and are seeking employment while living in a homeless shelter for at least two consecutive weeks. This bill will provide these families with some childcare support while in shelter to alleviate the bind they are placed in by requiring employment to access childcare. Employment is nearly impossible to obtain while living in a shelter without childcare, especially when facing multiple other barriers.

Families experiencing homelessness often have fractured social supports. Children who experience homelessness have increased health risks, developmental delays, child welfare involvement, and behavioral health issues to name a few of the long-term, high cost consequences. National research finds that young children who have stayed in shelters have higher risk for developmental delays and higher rates of behavioral challenges.¹

From October 2018 to September 2019, 526 children under the age of five were served in Connecticut's emergency shelter. The result is extreme levels of stress and trauma, especially for children, and increased use of public systems. Access to quality childcare for these children helps them through a difficult period, while freeing their parents to find work or sign up for needed employment training, and secure permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Research from the University of Connecticut reflects that the cost of a family's homelessness in Connecticut can be as much as \$122,460 per family homeless, or \$33,360 per person, when the costs of homelessness

¹ OPRE Report No. 2017-96, January 2017



as well as the additional costs of system utilization are accounted for. It is fair to say, that preventing homelessness with minimal intervention and cost - just makes sense and is the right thing for families.

This crisis is costly but solvable with leadership and coordination across federal, state, and local levels. We save public funds when we help these families exit homelessness more quickly. Many individuals and families are able to self-resolve their homelessness prior to being in shelter for 14 days. In addition, shelter diversion and rapid exit efforts are increasing the number of families that able to avoid entering the shelter system in the first place or rapidly exiting before the two-week mark. The shelters are finding that the families that stay past that mark are increasingly more high need.

I hope that you will support this important legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued support in ensuring family homelessness in CT is rare, brief, and one-time.

Respectfully submitted,

Kiley Gosselin

Executive Director
Partnership for Strong Communities

