

Johnathan Hayward:

Last year, when my 1-year-old daughter and I were experiencing homelessness and shuffling from place to place, I struggled with guilt, shame and embarrassment. As a father, it was the most trying period of my life because I could not provide for my daughter the way I wished to.

My professional expertise is in construction, so I applied for over 50 different opportunities in the New Haven area last year. This alone was a challenging task without consistent access to internet. When I did receive a response from a hiring manager, though, scheduling an interview proved to be difficult because I had no one to care for my daughter during the day. My babysitters were limited and unreliable, often cancelling last minute. But turning down interviews preemptively made me feel like a bad father. I did not want people thinking I was making excuses, because in reality, I was doing everything I could. But interviewing and accepting jobs without childcare in place felt like a lose-lose situation. The longest I could last in any job, without childcare, was a week at most. Sooner or later, I would have to quit which, consequently, burned professional bridges that could have improved my housing situation.

I wish it did not have to be so difficult to get back on your feet. Being a low-income father of a young daughter, without the proper support, is hard across all levels. I never expect anything but having the extra boost of childcare while during my job search last year would have been helpful. It is in my humble opinion, then, that the HB 5222 ACT to expand eligibility in the Care 4 Kids Program for families experiencing homelessness should be considered a top priority and passed without question. And I think I stand for all parents struggling with housing instability when I say this.