



The Connecticut Association for Human Services  
110 Bartholomew Avenue,  
Hartford , Connecticut 06106

**February 18, 2020**

**Testimony Before the Housing Committee**

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 5121 An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes**

Good Afternoon Senator Anwar, Representative McGee and Members of the Housing Committee,

I am Liz Fraser and I am the Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS),

As a policy and program non-profit with a mission of promoting equity, the economic well-being of all families, and thriving children, CAHS strongly supports HB 5121. H.B.5121 seeks to equalize and streamline the local permitting process for family home child care providers, providing greater access to child care across our state, and added opportunity for families to grow small businesses.

For thirty years Connecticut law has allowed residents to provide licensed home child care, in their particular home setting. However, due to some local restrictive permitting processes, many home-based providers are finding it increasingly difficult to open, expand or run their businesses. In some localities the intent of the law has been challenged through gaps in interpretation which, depending on the town or city, require compliance with additional local regulations and other red tape. This has effectively made providing licensed home-based care prohibitive for some families and is limiting availability.

Accessible childcare is a foundation for a working society. Affordable care, with proximity to transportation, and hours that match a parent work schedule, are necessary for parents to support their families and contribute to Connecticut's economy. Children are able to learn and grow in a developmentally appropriate setting and parents can work with peace of mind knowing that their children are in a nurturing and safe environment.

Historically, licensed home child care has filled this need for many families. It offers a homey setting for the children and is convenient for parents. Often, home-based providers can be more flexible with fluctuating parent work schedules, including providing care during non-traditional hours.<sup>1</sup> With providers in local neighborhoods, parents can find care closer to home, without the need for extended transportation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Urban Institute reports that 25,900 low-income children in Connecticut have parents who work at least some non-traditional hours [mostly in the early evening]. Family and group child care is the best-positioned solution to this problem.

However, it is the smaller, more intimate family environment that attracts many of the families who choose home-based care for their children, especially for babies and toddlers. In fact, home based care provides much of the infrastructure for infants and toddler child care across the state.

Ensuring a strong family child system of care is also an economic issue. Licensed home care providers are small business owners. Their services contribute to the economy thrice: they provide for families to work with peace of mind knowing their children are in good care; they provide a strong and nurturing environment for the children which leads to their healthy development; and owners are able to provide for *their own* family, while adding to their community's economic and cultural context.

In the context of Connecticut's child care landscape, providing the strong foundation for licensed family care to thrive is becoming increasingly important. Connecticut is experiencing a shortage of accessible infant and toddler care. It is estimated that Connecticut is short about 50,000 infant and toddler slots. This is not even considering what will be needed to attract young workers to grow our economy.<sup>2</sup> Connecticut communities need home based child care to even begin to fill this need.

Despite the need, it is becoming harder to provide home based care. Nationwide, 40% of all family childcare homes have closed in the past four years.<sup>3</sup> Connecticut's experience mirrors this trend with an estimated 30% of home-based care having closed over the past ten years.

The statute must be updated to ensure it is appropriately and lawfully followed. HB 5121 will strengthen housing protections for child care providers and include clarification that family child care homes can operate in all types of residential settings.

For our children, our communities, and economy, we need to protect family child care which is an essential component of Connecticut's child care infrastructure, by clarifying the standing law by passing HB 5121.

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*High-Quality Early Child Care: A Critical Piece of the Workforce Infrastructure: Framing Paper* | May 2019, Sarah Savage Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

<sup>2</sup> **The current availability [of licensed infant toddler slots slots] is insufficient to meet the need. The Office of Early Childhood estimates that across Connecticut, providers of all kinds only offered enough infant/toddler slots to meet only one-third of estimated statewide need.** *The Changing State of Early Childhood 2016 – 2017*, Connecticut Voices for Children, November 2017, p. 23. As recently as January 2020, OEC staff members have confirmed a shortage of 50,000 licensed slots for infants and toddlers.

