



**Testimony before the Housing Committee in Support of
H.B. No. 5121, AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTIONS FOR CERTAIN GROUP CHILD CARE
AND FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES.**

February 18, 2020

Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5121, An Act Concerning Protection for Certain Group Child Care and Family Child Care Homes.

My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success. The Early Childhood Alliance strongly supports H.B.5121, which will clarify and extend zoning protections that currently protect family child care homes to include group child care homes as well. The difference between the two is that in a group child care, the owner hires and assistant and can serve twice as many kids. This bill would also prevent landlords from prohibiting tenants from running a home child business in their apartment.

Connecticut faces a serious shortage of licensed, affordable, family-accessible child care, we must consider ways to support, rather than inhibit the growth of licensed home-based care. According to OEC, Connecticut needs 51,000 more infant and toddler child care slots, including 30,000 more subsidized slots. Across the state, 44% of people live in a “child care desert” where there is little or no access to quality child care.¹

Family and group child care is state licensed child care, and represents an important component of Connecticut’s child care system. These providers, in addition to complying with state licensing regulations that help to ensure safety, offer services that meet the diverse needs of communities across the state. Home-based providers and their intimate, more family-like settings can be particularly great fits for infant/toddler care, and they can offer non-traditional operating hours, linguistically-appropriate care, and importantly, locally accessible care to families who might not have their needs met in a center-based setting. Home-based care settings are an economic driver, as parents who cannot access affordable local child care may have to leave the workforce. They also provide important tax revenue in our communities.

¹ Rasheed Malik and Katie Hamm, “Mapping America’s Child Care Deserts” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017) available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/08/30/437988/mapping-americas-child-care-deserts/>.



Licensed child care is critical to the wellbeing of Connecticut's children and families, and for infants and toddlers in particular, for whom a safe, nurturing environment is particularly important during their early years of rapid growth and development. Our state should seize every opportunity to eliminate unregulated child care businesses which cannot be evaluated for safety and quality, especially in light of the six children who died between March 2016 and November 2017 in illegally operated home-based child care centers.

Connecticut has an incredible opportunity to do more to support and encourage licensed family and group child care, and H.B. 5121 is an important step in that process. The bill addressed the concerns of landlords over insurance liability and damage deposits associated with having a child care program in their rental property, while also extending and enforcing protections already outlined in the general statutes. The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance urges you to support H.B. 5121 to reduce barriers to licensed, accessible child care in Connecticut.

In closing, the bill before you, is the final version that passed the house last year but was never brought up for a vote in the Senate. We urge you to pass it and give the Senate another opportunity to vote on it.