

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5222

AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM FOR

Title: HOMELESS FAMILIES.

Vote Date: 3/9/2020

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/6/2020

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would allow for families experiencing homelessness access to quality childcare through the Care4Kids Program in order to provide children stable environments and parents the chance to find and keep employment.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Beth Bye, Commissioner, State Office of Early Childhood

The Commissioner writes testimony in support of HB 5222 and its expansion of the Care4Kids program to assist those considered homeless by the state.

Sarah Healy Eagan, Child Advocate, State Office of the Child Advocate

The state office supports HB 5222, noting a lot of children who are victims of abuse, or at risk of being abused come from situations where lack of stable housing is a primary concern. The stability that comes with access to quality childcare is an important role for the state to provide a better chance for these children to succeed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mary Cecchinato, Executive Director, Torrington Child Care Center, Inc.

Mary writes in support of HB 5222, as providing homeless families with childcare is essential to giving homeless parents the ability to look for jobs, work, while ensuring children's safety during these tasks.

Steven Hernández, Executive Director, The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, CWCSEO

The commission supports HB 5222 as it would provide students who are facing homeless and poverty some stability in their lives as they are at a higher risk for school moves, lack of supplies, and potential foster care placements. Being able to provide a steady and safe environment would help these children in their pursuit of successful lives. In turn, it would allow parents to have the time and peace of mind to enter into and remain in the work force.

Kiley Gordon, Executive Director, Partnership for Strong Communities, PSC

Kiley writes testimony in strong support of HB 5222. She references how children that experience homelessness and stay in shelters for extended periods of time face developmental delays, behavioral issues, and stress and trauma. Allowing for families experiencing homelessness to access quality childcare through the Care4Kids Program should serve to reduce these potential, lifelong effects of homelessness. It also allows for the parents to solve and prevent homeless in the future as they can secure employment and safe living environments. She cites that many families in the state can solve their homelessness before the allotted 14 days in a shelter expire and helping families accomplish this might mean preventing the need to enter a shelter in the first place.

Johnathan Hayward

Johnathan expressed his support for HB 5222, because of his personal experience as a father who experienced homelessness. He recalls feelings of, "guilt, shame and embarrassment," being unable to provide for his child while he experienced homelessness and unemployment. Scheduling interviews for employment proved difficult because of his lack of access to quality childcare and it hindered him from keeping a position for longer than one week.

Elizabeth LaRegina, Vocational Specialist, The Connection Inc.

Elizabeth writes in support of HB 5222, she has worked with over 75 families throughout the New Haven, Bridgeport, Middletown, and New London areas, in their search for long-term employment. Many of the families she works with come from a variety of different backgrounds, but many share the common trait of needing access to quality childcare. She notes that currently, parents experiencing homelessness are not eligible for Care4Kids until they have secured employment, but it is almost impossible to find employment without having reliable childcare first. Another problem in this being that many parents who find employment and subsequently lose that employment, no longer qualify for Care4Kids and it becomes a cycle that is stressful and damaging to the development of the children and the wellness of the parents.

Tess Leone, Intern, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, CCADV

The coalition writes in support of HB 5222. They want to highlight how domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Leaving these situations many times means a quick exit, with no resources and the only safe option being to utilize homeless shelters. From there, these women cannot afford to pay for quality childcare and often this keeps them from securing employment and being self-sufficient. Parents require peace of mind and the opportunity to work knowing their children are being cared for in order to build a more stable life for themselves and their children.

Grace Whitney

Grace supports the intent of HB 5222 but notes a discrepancy in the language of the definition of "homeless" that is used. HB 5222 uses the HUD definition of homeless which is as follows, "... as defined in 24 CFR Parts 91, 582," whereas the federal regulations on child care which preside over the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), who supports the Care4Kids Program is based on a the definition of homeless, "... as defined in section of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a)." These definition discrepancies are important as they create confusion as well as blocks in access.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: Lauren Riley,
Asst. Comm Clerk

Date: March 16, 2020