

Education Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5465

AN ACT INCREASING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR SALARIES AND

Title: EXPANDING CHILD CARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES.

Vote Date: 3/25/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/21/2022

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:

Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.

Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.

Rep. Trenee McGee, 116th Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.

Rep. Robin E. Comey, 102nd Dist.

Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.

Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill establishes the early childhood care and education salary enhancement program, to be administered by the Office of Early Childhood. The purpose of the creation of the early childhood care and education salary enhancement program is to increase the salaries of early childhood educators and to support existing school readiness and other state-funded preschool programs by increasing rates and providing programmatic flexibility.

Upon application to the commissioner of Early Childhood regarding the salary enhancement program, each early childhood care and education program is required to receive the following:

- \$20,000 for each licensee of a family childcare home
- \$6,000 for each full-time assistant or substitute staff member approved by the commissioner of Early Childhood
- \$3,000 for each part-time assistant or substitute staff member approved by Commissioner of Early Childhood, and employed by the early childcare home

Additionally, the bill expands the eligibility of the school readiness grants funds to include employees of early childhood care and education programs.

Also, the bill establishes an early childhood educator loan forgiveness grant program for early childcare employees, that meet the eligibility criteria. The early childhood educator loan forgiveness program will be administered by the Office of Higher Education in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood within available appropriations.

Increases the cost per child for the school readiness program from \$9,027 to \$10,027

Furthermore, the bill expands the eligibility for the Care4Kids to families with a gross income up to 75% of the state-wide median income up from 50% percent. The bill also requires the subsidy paid under the childcare subsidy program be at least 75% of the market rate for said services as determined by the Commissioner of Early Childhood.

Broadens the definition of a family child care home to include if an assistant or substitute staff member approved by the Commissioner of Early Childhood is present with no more than 9 children.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood](#): "Both H.B. 5465 and S.B. 1 lay out laudable goals for Connecticut's child care industry. Some of these goals, not all, would require significant state funding. These two bills include wage increases for all child care providers – centers, group family child care homes, and family child care homes. Both increase the school readiness and child day care rate, each bill at different amounts. This funding is not reflected in the Governor's budget."

[Sarah Healy Eagan, Child Advocate, The Office of the Child Advocate](#): "The OCA strongly supports efforts to strengthen the state's existing school readiness and preschool programs by increasing funding. We must ensure that all children, regardless of income and zip code, have access to high quality early childhood education and support. OCA cannot overstate how transformational comprehensive investment in this essential support and service delivery system is and will be for children and families."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Carly Adames, Executive Director, Children's Day School](#): "It is unfortunate that it has taken such dire and threatening circumstances to finally listen to the voices of early childhood advocates and begin to value the quality of working conditions for employees in the field who are caring for and educating the next generation. Still, I am grateful the opportunity has come for my colleagues who are still hanging on by a thread. I only hope that this committee acts quickly enough to stop the massive resignation from this field before it is too late."

[Maegan Adams, Executive Director, Bristol Child Development Center](#): "The childcare sector is in crisis and investments in the early care and education system cannot come soon enough. Centers across the state are struggling, and many programs are on the brink of collapse. This collapse of the early childhood sector would mean a few things, families unable to work because of the lack of care which will lead to an economic collapse, teachers out of jobs, and children losing out on essential educational opportunities."

[Christie Balka, Vice President, All Our Kin](#): "Poverty level wages and insufficient provider reimbursements hurt child care program quality. All child care providers – especially family child care providers – struggle to pay for professional development, or to purchase a new curriculum, books and art supplies. Providers tell my colleagues and I how challenging it is to remain present for children when they don't know how they're going to pay bills coming due at the end of the month. They tell us how difficult it is to stay in the field when they're constantly forced to make financial choices that could undermine program quality and their own physical and mental health."

[Catherine R. Battista, President, CT Family Resource Alliance](#): "The complex issues brought about by the pandemic have made it clear that the success of schools, families, and communities are interdependent. Investing in mutually beneficial school-family-community partnerships will strengthen families and stabilize the economy. The CT Family Resource Center Alliance supports SB No. 1 and HB No. 5465."

[Allison Blake, Chief Executive Officer, Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut](#): "We have appreciated the support of the current Administration and believe they are working hard to address longstanding disparities in funding and other supports for Connecticut's early childhood programs, but the last two years have been extremely difficult due to the necessary public health restrictions which have limited our capacity to provide care. The Board of Child and Family Agency of SECT remains committed to serving these vulnerable populations but are challenged by the burden of raising sufficient funds to underwrite the costs of providing this essential service."

[Paige M. Bray, Associate Professor of Early Childhood, University of Hartford](#): "The ENTIRE system needs equitable support across all settings. There is no room to raise tuition for parents that can't afford early care and education now. Early Care educators, directors and staff need substantial wage supplements and benefits for private centers, nonprofit centers (including religious programs) and family child care providers. State funded and school readiness programs, which have not had a meaningful increase since 2015, need to have reimbursement rates generously adjusted and be permitted to use funds for desperately needed infant and toddler care and education."

[Liz Bryden, Chief Operating Officer, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford](#): "Constant teacher turnover is extremely costly for agencies but, more importantly, it disrupts the children's education and they experience a sense of loss every time a teacher must make the difficult decision to leave the classroom in order to make an adequate salary. When children are unable to form strong positive relationships with teachers early on due to constant turnover, it can affect their sense of safety and security in school and ultimately, their educational success. Investing in early childhood programs will provide children with the stable foundation they need to be successful in their academic career and beyond."

[John L. Cattelan, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs](#): "Childcare is already unaffordable and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the children care system will significantly become more expensive. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children. We also believe that early childcare educators are professionals that should be paid in a manner that reflects the importance of their profession. These professionals are helping our

future students learn and grow in an environment that will prepare them for success in K-12 schools and we need to place a public value on these positions."

[Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#): "CABE supports the provisions of HB 5465, which support existing school readiness and other state funded preschool programs. Continued efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to make early care and education programs available to all children in need are critical. CABE supports efforts by the State Department of Education and other public private child and family service agencies to promote and encourage a wide range of public and private provider preschool programs and services. Local boards of education also need the flexibility to design, develop and implement early childhood education programs to increase the likelihood of children school success and decrease special education costs."

[Maureen Fontaine, Owner, Bright Beginnings of Fairfield](#): "In my 33 years as a FCC teacher, I have never submitted testimony prior to today. I fear for the children and families in our state if action is not taken. I have a very long wait list and parents are calling saying they are on wait lists at many programs and they are desperate for a quality, affordable early childhood program for their child. I strongly urge you to support HB5465 because the families in CT deserve to have access to a high quality, affordable early childhood programs in a setting of their choice. That will not be possible in the future if action is not taken. At a bare minimum, fair and equitable compensation means all early childhood teachers, including FCC teachers, receive compensation commensurate with elementary school teachers with similar experience and credentials."

[Liz Fraser, Policy Director, Connecticut Association for Human Services](#): "The answer is clear, not enough public funding has been put into a system of early care and education that gives all children the strong start they need, and supports the ability of parents to work, raise their families, and contribute to the overall economy. While federal funding is greatly needed, there is the real possibility that it might not be here in time to provide much needed relief. If we want to keep our young adults in the state, attract a young and vibrant workforce to Connecticut, and have quality early care experience for their children, then we need to value early care and education as a public good, and give parents the opportunity to be financially secure in our state."

[Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN](#): "We are long overdue to a salary improvement for our early childhood educators. Without them, the entire system of childcare and early childhood education and development breaks down. This would be devastating to our families, especially those from low-income, black and brown communities. Inflationary pressures have severely dented the purchasing power of early childhood educators. And, the amounts prior to inflation were improperly low. So we must make up for lost time, and stabilize the employment sector for early childhood. Now, more than ever, is the time to invest."

[Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#): "The Hartford Foundation also offers its support for House Bill 5465 which will provide support for existing school readiness and other state-funded preschool programs by increasing funding and program flexibility."

[Stephen J. Hegedus, President, AACTE-CT Chapter](#): "The AACTE-CT supports this legislation. It is critical to note this bill will help address the fact that early childhood compensation matters."

[Emma O. Heintz, Policy Practice Intern, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund \(CWEALF\)](#): "Child care is essential to our economy. Lawmakers must take bold and intentional action this year to strengthen our current child care system and ensure an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. CWEALF urges the Committee to advance H.B. 5465 and S.B. 1 as necessary steps forward in uplifting the economic security of child care educators as well as women and families in our state who depend on access to affordable child care to advance in the workforce and achieve economic self-sufficiency."

[David Kulick, Member, Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children](#): "The time for change is now and I ask you to invest in CT's future by fixing the childcare crisis we are facing. By investing in early education you are also investing in families and communities. Show that Connecticut can lead the way in building strong communities by investing in early education. CTAEYC stands ready to support your work and welcomes the opportunity to speak with you further about the complex nature of CT's childcare system."

[Mark LaFortune, Chief Executive Officer, Naugatuck YMCA](#): "Quality childcare is a necessity if our state's economy is to return to prepandemic levels. Childcare is already unaffordable and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the state will be making the children care system significantly more expensive. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children."

[William McCullough, Pastor, FaithActs for Education](#): "Today we are engaged on Senate Bills 1, 273 and 274, and House Bill 5465. We support passage of all four and pledge to work with you to see them become law. If we can get these four bills AND HB 5283, An Act Concerning the ECS Grant Formula and the Funding of Other Education Programs, into law this year we will have done a good session's work."

[Greg Melville, Board of Directors Member, Friends Center for Children](#): "Whatever assistance you may provide will go a long way to helping a vital workforce that is woefully underfunded by the public that stands to gain so much from its future citizens. This applies as well to whatever financial help you may provide to the hardworking, young parents who treasure being able to send their children to Friends Center for Children."

[Deborah Monahan, Chief Executive Officer, Thames Valley Council for Community Action](#): "However, we are struggling to open up all our classrooms due to staffing shortages. Even with stabilization resources we do not have enough funding to pay staff the money they deserve and need. A recent poll of CT. Community colleges indicated that enrollments in the Early Childhood Education programs have gone down 65% in the last 6 years. I urge you to increase funding and fully fund, these Early Child Care programs before the child care system in Connecticut collapses to a point of more significant crisis. Please pass HB 5465 and SB 1."

[Susan Radway, Executive Director, Riverfront Children's Center](#): "The childcare system needs on-going, substantial wage supplements and benefits for small private centers, nonprofit centers, and family childcare providers. Childcare programs throughout the state are struggling to provide quality services with inadequate funding. It is time to recognize the childcare industry for what it is, essential to families and Connecticut's economy. Please put funding in the budget to support Connecticut's childcare industry."

[Rep. Reyes Jr., Deputy Speaker, State of Connecticut House of Representatives](#): "I urge you to increase funding and fully fund, these Early Child Care programs before the child care system in Connecticut collapses to a point of more significant crisis. Please pass HB 5465 and SB 1."

[Lauren Ruth, Research and Policy Director, Connecticut Voices for Children](#): "Both SB 1 and HB 5465 include provisions to increase the salaries of early childhood educators and expand family access to needed child care. Both measures are desperately needed to stabilize the early childhood education industry in the wake of COVID-19 and develop the early childhood education industry as a vital infrastructure that allows parents to work, grows the economy, and prepares young children for school. To reduce redundancy in our testimony, we discuss similar provisions within the bills together rather than breaking them apart for each bill."

[Jessica Sager, Chief Executive Officer, All Our Kin](#): " Inequitable funding yields inequitable outcomes for children and families. Paying child care providers poverty wages does not fulfill our obligation to them and the children and families they serve. I urge you to fund an equitable wage supplement for all child care educators and an across-the- board rate increase for all providers – family- and center-based child care, School Readiness and Child Day Care programs."

[Tony Sharillo, Director of Operations, Valley Shore YMCA](#): "The state of Connecticut needs to realize that early childcare educators are professionals that should be paid in a manner that reflects the importance of their profession. These professionals are helping our future students learn and grow in an environment that will prepare them for success in K-12 schools and we need to place a public value on these positions."

[Harold Sparrow, President – Chief Executive Officer, YMCA of Greater Hartford](#): "During the past 20 years YMCA childcare centers have received one rate increase of three percent for Care4Kids and School Readiness. During that same time, the minimum wage has increased by over 50% and inflation has risen by almost 50% as well. Almost 1,400 children utilize the Care4Kids program, and 1,000 children are enrolled in a school readiness with one of our YMCAs across the state of Connecticut. That is why it's imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children."

[Barbara Vita, Early Childhood Network Specialist, Connecticut After School Network](#): "The childcare sector is in crisis. It needs workers now. But what is the incentive if the pay is so low? Some childcare businesses have closed, but many more have closed classrooms because they can't find staff. This puts childcare businesses in danger of completely closing in the next few months, and it is already leaving families without care. If families are unable to find affordable childcare they will not be able to work, or worse, they will be forced to leave their children in unsafe and potentially harmful settings. We need to pay our early childhood professionals a living wage."

[Jennifer L. Yorke, Team Coordinator, Mansfield Discovery Depot](#): "I have seen highly qualified staff members leave our center to work in public education where they would receive a higher salary based on their education level. Unfortunately, these staff members could not stay working in private sector Early Childhood Education because the salaries were not comparable to the public schools."

[Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate, Connecticut Business and Industry Association](#): "As Connecticut begins to shift into the recovery and growth mindset, it has never been more important to address the systemic issues that were revealed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Working parents paid an enormous price due to the lockdowns and lack of qualified childcare options, and Connecticut employers today are having trouble hiring and retaining employees as a result of this challenge."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Dean Cesarina Thompson, College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, University of Hartford](#): "We would ask that given the small handful of accredited programs in the state that award these degrees, 50% of which are in private institutions of higher education, that the bill be amended so that the proposed loan forgiveness program may support graduates from public and private, nonprofit institutions of higher education."

[Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges](#): "We would ask that given the small handful of accredited programs in the state that award these degrees, that the bill be amended so that the proposed loan forgiveness program may support graduates from public and private, non-profit institutions of higher education."

All testimony can be found on the [CGA website](#).

Reported by: Matthew Boucher

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