

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5346

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILD CARE.

Vote Date: 3/18/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/6/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill was filed in order to better fund childcare in Connecticut. Many Connecticut residents live in 'childcare deserts' meaning that there are not any accessible, affordable childcare options near them. The provisions in this bill seek to ameliorate this problem by providing more funding to open new childcare centers in places which do not have them, study the possible conversion of state-owned property into childcare infrastructure, among others.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

This bill's substitute language removes Sec. 5 of the raised bill. This section required OEC to study the feasibility of expanding early childhood teacher credential qualifications to include experiences gained in nontraditional childcare settings and other forms of informal childcare.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[CT Department of Administrative Services](#) provides a comment on Sec. 4 of this bill, which would require DAS to conduct a study of state-owned buildings and property for the purpose of utilizing or converting these spaces for use in early childhood care. They state that the department appreciates the intent of this section, but notes that DAS only oversees around 10 percent of state-owned property.

[CT Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner, Beth Bye](#) supports some sections of this bill, but also provides some suggestions for improvement. They do not express support for Sec. 1 - 3 of this legislation, as they state that the mechanism to deposit unexpended funding into the Early Childhood Education Fund is not part of the Governor's FY25 budget proposal.

They express support for Sec. 4, stating that they support the concerns of the Department of Administrative Services. Finally, they do not express support for Sec. 5, as the OEC has already proposed changes to simplify the pathway to becoming a qualified staff member and does not see the additional licensing changes as outlined in this bill to be necessary.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[CT Alliance of YMCAs, Employee, John Cattelan;](#) supports this bill, stating that providing funding to the Early Childhood Education Fund would be instrumental in providing financial aid to the childcare sector.

[CT Early Childhood Alliance, Executive Director, Merrill Gay;](#) expresses general support for this bill, but states that it is not sufficient to cover the needs of the childcare sector. They suggest finding additional ways to meet the challenge of funding the early care and education system.

[ConnCAN, Executive Director, Steven Hernandez;](#) expresses general support for this bill. They state that thousands of families in Connecticut live in childcare deserts, which limits the ability for parents to earn a living, make family and career decisions and spend quality time with children. They express support for this bill stating that the funds provided in it will lessen the financial burden of starting a new childcare program.

[CT Voices for Children, Research & Policy Fellow, Carla Abdo-Katsipis;](#) supports this bill, stating that it ensures that needed funds for early childhood care are dedicated and spent in a timely manner, and will potentially lead to the creation of additional childcare infrastructure. They state that this is incredibly important, given that there has been a decrease in state-funded childcare slots for infants, toddlers and preschoolers over recent years.

[YWCA Greenwich, President & CEO, Mary Lee Kiernan;](#) expresses strong support for this bill, noting that it is important to the YWCA's mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. They state that this bill will make childcare programming more affordable and accessible for all Connecticut families who need it.

[RM Consulting CT, Consultant, Randi McCray;](#) supports this bill, stating that it is a pivotal step towards rectifying shortcomings in the childcare system in Connecticut. They state that they have personally struggled with affording high-quality childcare for their children and can imagine that this is a problem faced by countless families across the state. They believe that this bill is the first step in the right direction to make childcare affordable and accessible for all.

[Private Citizen, Patrice Rutty;](#) expresses support for this bill, providing their personal experience of struggling to find affordable childcare for their children. They state that providing more funding to these programs will allow families like theirs to have much more economic freedom in other facets of their lives.

[American Heart Association CT, Government Relations Director, Jim Williams;](#) expresses strong support for this bill, stating that during childhood one's brain develops

rapidly, which builds an important foundation for future learning, behavior and health. They also state that strong investment into early childhood education has economic benefits as well, stating that research has shown that high quality childcare for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment.

SEIU CT State Council, Representative, Stacey Zimmerman; supports this bill, stating that it is a great step in the continued professionalization of the early education field. They also suggest replacing the language of Sec. 3 with language included in SB 249 instead.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of this bill:

They note that the current childcare system in Connecticut is broken. They state that this bill will keep childcare funding safe and ensure that funding for these programs is always available.

Bristol Child Development Center, Executive Director of Operations, Maegan Adams

Private Citizen, Kerzell Barnes

Private Citizen, Neta Lidia Bautista

Private Citizen, Stacey Bonet

Private Citizen, Shea Brown

Private Citizen, Sharon Cloutier

Teacher, Lynn Dasent

Private Citizen, Nahid Farhad

Home Daycare Provider, Idania Garcia

Farnam Nursery School, Employee, Shubhra Gupta

Nest Shoreline Campus, Administrative Assistant, Caitlyn Healy

Private Citizen, Sheree Higgins

CTAEYC, Past Co-President, David Kulick

Childcare Provider, Yrene Luna

Friends Center for Children, Secretary, Gregory Melville

Bethesda Nursery School, Board President, Caley Morton

Teacher, Emily Niubo

Private Citizen, Elizabeth Redman

Steelways Inc., Office Manager, Kimberly Reichert

Private Citizen, Steven Reichert

Enjoy Learning Family Day Care, Employee, Ruth Robledo

Private Citizen, Randi Rubin Rodriguez

Friends Center for Children, Teacher, Virginia Sharene

Private Citizen, Ginger Tait

Private Citizen, Francheska Velazquez

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Private Citizen, Debbie Esposito; opposes this bill, stating that it is misleading. They express opposition to the language regarding lapsing of funds and suggests adjusting the language so that unused funds may be kept properly.

Reported by: Benjamin Lee

Date: 4/8/24

