

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-286

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION.

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 seeks to deal with certain present issues regarding early childhood care and education programs by mandating fair pay for staff and enhancing access to support services. The bill attempts to establish a consistent payment schedule for early childhood educators to ensure that these professionals are paid a salary appropriate for their abilities and responsibilities. The bill aims to boost the often-underpaid labor in this industry while acknowledging their role in caring for and teaching young children throughout their early years of life.

The bill also makes employees of early childhood care and education programs eligible for Care 4 Kids. This expansion would not only help employees financially but also enhance families' access to childcare services. Furthermore, the bill seeks to enhance the early childhood education profession by expanding the early childhood incubator program and fostering innovation and growth within these programs to better serve children and families across the country.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language for this bill removes Sec. 1 and adds a provision prohibiting the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner from issuing more than 20 family child care incubator licenses.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner, Beth Bye: supports this bill as part of its legislative agenda this session. This testimony stresses the need to value and properly compensate such professionals, with an emphasis on carefully preparing a payment study based on national research and data. They also support Sec. 3, which expands the licensed family childcare incubator model, recognizing its potential to boost sector stability and capacity.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Advocacy Outreach Manager, Paul Amarone: supports this bill and its attempts to expand the childcare business incubator pilot program to more locations around the state. They urge that the number of new incubators be limited to twenty to guarantee effective management and administration by the Office of Early Childhood and partner non-profit organizations. They believe that enabling the Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood to permit many groups in each city or town would help to address the high demand for childcare services in certain locations.

Connecticut Central Coast YMCA, President and CEO, Timothy Bartlett: supports this bill and its proposed salary increase for early childcare instructors, emphasizing the importance of state investment in achieving it while also expressing concerns about the bill's lack of clarity regarding funding mechanisms. They also support Sec. 2, which permits childcare workers to be eligible for Care4Kids, citing proof from other states that shows it has the potential to assist recruitment efforts in Connecticut, where there are over 4,000 childcare job openings, resulting in classroom closures.

Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs, Vice President of Government Relations, John Cattelan: supports the bill, specifically Sec. 2 which allows childcare workers to qualify for Care4Kids, claiming the program's success in Kentucky and Rhode Island. They highlight the excessive cost of daycare in Connecticut, which is estimated to be between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year and underline the need for governmental involvement in guaranteeing fair pay for childcare workers. They believe that expanding access to Care4Kids and giving state wage assistance are big steps toward reducing financial obstacles and increasing employee satisfaction in the childcare field.

Torrington Child Care Center, Executive Director and Co-Chair of the State Funded Child Care Center Directors Forum, Mary Cecchinato: supports the bill's aim but is concerned about the financial burden it would have on centers like hers. While appreciating the aim of paying employees appropriately, she emphasizes the bill's lack of funding options to satisfy the Office of Early Childhood's mandatory salary scale. They point out the increased expenses her facility would face, such as compensation adjustments for staff members and growing healthcare costs, which would demand an increase in the per-child fee. Despite her support for employees having access to free childcare through the Care4Kids program, she cautions against taking the bill's cost for centers lightly.

Town of Windham, Resident, Ian Matthew: supports this bill as a single parent of three children under the age of ten. They underline the potential of the bill to help families like his overcome the challenges of finding cheap childcare and afterschool programs. They stress the importance of laws like these in decreasing financial stress and encouraging parents to work longer hours, so promoting economic stability for families and communities. They agree

with the proposed policies' emphasis on improving compensation for early childhood education workers and extending apprenticeship and incubator programs, acknowledging educators' role in influencing children's futures.

Kiddie Korner Daycare, Director, Reggie Hayes: supports the intent of this bill, however, raises concern about the possible financial burden on their center as a result of the required compensation plan established in Sec. 1. While accepting the value of providing better salaries to employees, they emphasize the considerable impact it would have on their already stretched budget and the possibility of increasing tuition rates for parents. They understand the potential advantages of making early care more available to educators, which may draw skilled professionals to the field.

New Britain YMCA, Executive Director, Tracey Madden-Hennessey: supports the bill and its various aspects related to early care and education. They support adding early childhood educators to the childcare assistance program and increasing childcare business incubator locations, citing their organization's assistance in developing such a program in New Britain, Connecticut. While they embrace the idea of improved teacher salaries, they underline the need for more funds to make it a reality, which emphasizes the financial strain on private groups seeking to finance state initiatives.

Connecticut Voices for Children, Research and Policy Fellow, Carla B. Abdo-Katsipis: supports this bill emphasizing its requirements for fair pay for early childhood education workers, increased childcare assistance, and the extension of the Family Child Care Pilot. They emphasize the relevance of these policies in providing stability and greater wages for ECE employees, which is critical in the face of industry uncertainty and shrinking. They express worry about future tuition raises for families and their conflict with federal requirements in Sec. 2. However, they believe that setting up the bill is necessary to assist professionals and maintain the well-being of children and families across the state.

Mansfield Discovery Depot, Executive Director, Debbie Plourde: supports the bill and its suggested OEC compensation but is concerned about its real-world consequences for their facility. They emphasize the huge financial burden it would create, estimating a cost of almost \$150,000 in pay alone for her center's employees. They underline the possible impact on parents, arguing that without improved government assistance, families will suffer the greatest burden of the increasing expenses, perhaps leading to families looking for other childcare options.

Sleeping Giant Day Care, Director, Edie Reichard: supports the intent of the bill and the inclusion of early childhood care staff in the Care4Kids program. They recognize the significance of fair pay for staff but stress the financial hardship the bill would have on the institution, which runs under tight budget limits. They discuss the huge cost of adopting the proposed payment increases, including concerns about potential fee increases that might make childcare costly for families.

Stamford YMCA, Executive Director, Suzanne Richards: supports the goal of this bill, recognizing the wage increase proposed in Sec. 1, but emphasizing the necessity for government investment to guarantee its successful implementation. They emphasize their support for Sec. 2, highlighting recent projects in Kentucky and Rhode Island that granted childcare workers Care4Kids eligibility, which might help hiring and keeping efforts. They

advocate for state funding to support the projected wage increase, as well as childcare assistance to maintain staff and relieve financial burdens on parents.

Connecticut Project Action Fund, Policy and Advocacy Strategist, Coralys Santana: supports this bill focusing on the need for immediate action to address Connecticut's early childhood care and education problem. Their testimony focuses on supporting Sec. 3 of the bill, which expands the Child Care Business Incubator Model, emphasizing its ability to improve communities, encourage economic growth, and provide families with affordable, high-quality childcare. While supporting the proposal, they also recommend changing the language to remove the sunset date and ensure a long-term expansion, urging the committee to support the bill and make investments in initiatives that promote access to high-quality early childhood education and community economic development.

All Our Kin, Policy Specialist, Jade Thomas: supports the bill and emphasizes the importance of home-based childcare businesses in Connecticut's early childhood education system. While they support the bill's goal of increasing compensation for early educators, they are concerned about the lack of resources associated with it, highlighting the need for equal pay for care quality. They underline the importance of investing in early childhood education as a benefit to society, urging for collaboration and long-term financial solutions.

Connecticut American Heart Association, Government Relations Director, Jim Williams: supports this bill. They emphasize their objective of encouraging people to live longer, healthier lives. The testimony emphasizes the need to address specific communication, recruitment, and continuation of licensed early childhood education programs, as well as prioritizing financing for underprivileged communities. They believe that these proposals will help to address Connecticut's lack of high-quality, low-cost early childcare, recognizing the importance of early childhood education in shaping future learning, behavior, and health outcomes.

CSEA SEIU Local 2001, President, Travis Woodward: supports the bill's goal and the need of addressing the industry's low pay but emphasizes the need for enough resources to keep up any mandatory salary increases. They are concerned that without appropriate money, the goals established in Sec. 1 of the law to boost pay would remain unrealistic. They also underline the importance of a long-term approach to address poor pay in early childhood education.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

Little Friends Child Care, Director/Owner, Verna Esposito: supports this bill however expresses great concern, specifically with Sec. 1's demand for increased staff wages following OEC compensation standards. Despite their readiness to pay better wages, they emphasize the financial difficulties caused by rising overhead costs and the inability to raise tuition without eliminating families. They emphasize the moral dilemma of possibly pricing out families in major fields and reject the practice of investment firms abusing childcare demand.

They question whether company efforts emphasize reasonable compensation for staff or profits, as well as calling for a more comprehensive strategy to tackle the daycare problem.

[Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Executive Director, Merrill Gay](#): expresses support for many provisions of this bill but also suggest some changes to Sec. 1 and 3. While pointing out Sec. 1's attempt to address the issue of low pay in early care and education, they express worry that demanding higher compensation without enough financing may result in the closing down of many childcare centers around the state. They advocate for the establishment of a fund separate from the spending cap to promote greater wages and make early care and education easier to obtain. The testimony supports the development of the family childcare incubator pilot program detailed in Sec. 3, recognizing its potential to solve the childcare provider shortage.

The following additional members of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance submitted testimony on this bill.

They state that they support the intent of the bill however express worry and dissatisfaction over the bill's possible impact on privately run early learning institutions. They acknowledge the need to raise pay for childcare workers, but they emphasize the financial burden such laws would create, stating that their major source of earnings is parent-paid tuition. They underline the difficulties of attracting and maintaining talented employees and emphasize the need for practical solutions that do not burden families or jeopardize existing facilities.

[Maegan Adams](#)

[Virginia Boffardi](#)

[Loryn Cabrera](#)

[Nelson Feliciano](#)

[Linda Ferranti](#)

[Manager of Membership – Advocacy, Vanessa Hawke](#)

[Tara Kennedy](#)

[Megin Meyer](#)

[Christian Mirowski](#)

[Caley Morton](#)

[Krista Pisano](#)

[Alicia Powers](#)

[Eileen Ward](#)

[Honey Bear Learning Center, Director, Catherine Vanicky](#): expresses support for the bill, emphasizing the significance of paying a decent wage to early development teachers, as indicated in the Connecticut Office of Early Development Recommended Salary Schedule. However, they are concerned that their daycare program would be unable to pay the planned salary rise without extra money from the CT Office of Early Childhood. They emphasize their teaching staff's devotion and community services, as well as the importance of equal pay in a low-wage profession.

Reported by: Mickaelah Joseph

Date: 4/9/24