



Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 112: An Act Providing Child Care for Assistance Recipients Enrolled in Approved Higher Education Programs

Sarah Iverson
Education Committee
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Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Sarah Iverson and I am an Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 112: An Act Providing Child Care for Assistance Recipients Enrolled in Approved Higher Education Programs. Care4Kids, Connecticut's largest child subsidy program, is a crucial support for Connecticut's children and low-to moderate-income working families. **Expanding Care4Kids support to parents who attend institutions of higher education advances the ultimate goal of the program: economic self-sufficiency.**

Higher levels of education lead to higher earnings. An individual with a college degree earns, on average, more than 60 percent more over her lifetime than an individual with a high school diploma.¹ In Connecticut, the average hourly wage for a college graduate is \$30.51, compared to \$15.24 for a high school graduate and \$11.00 for an individual with no high school diploma.² In addition to earning higher wages, individuals with college degrees are more likely than others to be offered employer-provided health insurance and benefit plans.³ Higher levels of education also expand the job opportunities available to individuals. Sixty percent of the twenty fastest growing occupations in Connecticut – including computer software engineers, network systems analysts, and physical therapists – require a minimum of a bachelor's or master's degree (and, notably, command salaries in excess of \$75,000 annually).⁴

When parents obtain advanced educational degrees, their children benefit. Care4Kids helps both parents and children, by allowing parents to work while their children are in high-quality, language-rich, nurturing, responsive environments that promote their cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development. However, by expanding eligibility to parents attending institutions of higher education, Care4Kids can help parents and children in another way: improving the long-term prospects for both. Children of parents with higher levels of education enter kindergarten better prepared for school (e.g. recognizing their letters, being able to count to 20, writing their names), and are more likely to have positive health, educational, and employment outcomes.⁵ Cognitive skills of children between ages 3 and 5 have also been shown to be highly correlated with maternal education level.⁶

When parents obtain advanced educational degrees, research shows that they become more economically self-sufficient and more civically engaged. College graduates are much less likely

than individuals with lower levels of education to participate in public assistance programs or to be unemployed.⁷ The typical college graduate pays 78 percent more in taxes than the typical high school graduate.⁸ College graduates are also more likely to vote and to volunteer.⁹

Expanding Care4Kids to parents attending institutions of higher education transforms the program from mere work support into a true two-generation strategy, one that can raise families out of poverty and start children on the road to success in school and beyond.

However, in order to ensure that Care4Kids can continue to serve children of parents attending institutions of higher education, as well as the populations it currently serves (mainly low-income working parents and those receiving Temporary Family Assistance), the legislature must not simply expand eligibility but must also expand funding. Without increased funds to support such increased eligibility, new applicants may be denied access to this crucial subsidy program. The Governor proposes to flat fund Care 4 Kids (\$122.1 million) in Fiscal Year 2017, which will not be sufficient to maintain care for all children eligible for the program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need additional information.

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¹ Baum, Sandy, Ma, Jennifer, and Payea, Kathleen, “Education Pays 2013,” (2013), available at <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>.

² DeFiesta, Nick and Thomas, Derek, “The State of Working Connecticut, 2015,” (November 2015), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Working%20CT%202015.pdf>.

³ Baum, Sandy, Ma, Jennifer, and Payea, Kathleen, “Education Pays 2013,” (2013), available at <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>.

⁴ Connecticut Department of Labor, “Connecticut’s Industries and Occupations: Forecast 2014,” (Summer 2006), available at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/misc/forecast2014.pdf>.

⁵ Baum, Sandy, Ma, Jennifer, and Payea, Kathleen, “Education Pays 2013,” (2013), available at <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>.

⁶ Vandell, Deborah and Wolfe, Barbara, “Child Care Quality: Does it Matter and Does It Need to be Improved?” (2001), available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ccquality00/execsum.htm>.

⁷ Baum, Sandy, Ma, Jennifer, and Payea, Kathleen, “Education Pays 2013,” (2013), available at <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*