Care 4 Kids in Connecticut
The Impact of Program Closure on Children, Parents, and Providers

Executive Summary

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In this brief, we provide an overview of Care 4 Kids, examine the impact of the program’s closure on children, families and employers, and discuss possibilities for fully funding the Care 4 Kids program. Based on a combination of data analysis and parent and provider interviews, we document:

**Extensive Need for Care 4 Kids**

- **Our state has a high need for affordable child care.** Thirty percent of working parents with children under age five live in low-income households (earning less than 50 percent of state median income). Economic data and parent stories confirm that child care is both essential and unaffordable to low-income families in Connecticut without the Care 4 Kids subsidy or other supports.

- **Care 4 Kids child care subsidies address gaps in coverage by region and age.** Care 4 Kids is the only state wide childcare subsidy for working parents. In 49% of towns, Care 4 Kids is the only form of state subsidy for child care; these towns lack School Readiness, Smart Start classrooms, state-funded child development centers, and Head Start programs. Statewide, Care 4 Kids provides the primary subsidies for infant and toddler care.

**Impact of Changes to Care 4 Kids Eligibility**

- **Since the Closure of Care 4 Kids, enrollment has dropped significantly.** The current waitlist contains about 3,000 families. The waitlist is projected to increase to about 5,000 families by July 2017.

- **Connecticut may see a decline in the number of child care centers and home day care providers.** Loss of child care funding could have a spiraling effect, as centers and home care providers that receive partial funding from Care 4 Kids subsidies close their doors and are thus unable to meet the needs of other working parents.

- **Thousands of families may face a summer camp crisis.** Care 4 Kids enrollment increases during the summer: 2,200 families requested “summer only” child care subsidies in 2016. Given the closure of Care 4 Kids to new applicants, we predict about 2,200 families (in addition to the regular waitlist) may be unable to afford safe child care this coming summer.

**Policies to Protect Care 4 Kids Funding**

Full funding of Care 4 Kids would require an additional $33 million per year above current FY 2017 allocations. This brief explores several proposed funding options.