



News Release

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EMBARGOED UNTIL:
NOVEMBER 20, 2017

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Report: After Years of Expansion, Connecticut's Early Childhood Programs Are at Risk

NEW HAVEN – For more than a decade, Connecticut has made expanding early care and education programs a policy and budget priority. In recent years, however, this commitment to early childhood has wavered, putting the integrity of the system and the impressive gains closing education disparities at risk. In a new report, Connecticut Voices for Children analyzes the long-term trends in state funding for these programs and assesses the likely impact of recent changes on the future of the state.

Connecticut had been increasing funding for early childhood programs devoted to low-income children for many years and has made real progress in terms of both access to and quality of care. State investments have benefited not only children and families, but also local businesses and communities as quality programs allow parents to work at the same time as they lay the groundwork for later school success.

“Investing in early childhood makes sense,” says Nicole Updegrove, Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children. “Ensuring that every child and family can access quality early childhood programs is one of the best steps the state can take to help children and families thrive.”

The report finds, however, that wide disparities in access to care based on race and geography persist. Moreover, the recent rounds of austerity budgeting have forced the Office of Early Childhood to close enrollment to Care 4 Kids, a key program that serves low-income families. Lack of funding has triggered a wave of closures among community and family providers. The program will soon reopen to some families, but not all.

“Too often, we hear that ensuring opportunity for every child is beyond our reach: that we lack the money or the ability to assure quality early care and education so that all our children enter school ready to learn,” says Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director at Connecticut Voices for Children. “In truth, we cannot afford not to support the success of our children, knowing that improved educational outcomes and thriving families are essential preconditions to the long-term success and prosperity of our state.”

The report recommends that Connecticut recommit to prioritizing early childhood care and education as a part of a broader opportunity agenda. Moving towards universal early care and education would help the state reduce disparities and boost present and future economic growth.

About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based policy think tank based in New Haven, Connecticut. Our Mission is to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut's young people and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies. To achieve these objectives, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level and works to develop the next generation of leaders. Connecticut Voices would like to acknowledge the support of the Connecticut Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, a project of the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy.