



# News Release

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## The Future of Our State Starts Today

NEW HAVEN – Connecticut Voices for Children recently released an Early Care and Education Candidate Guide which provides an overview of the current challenges pertaining to early childhood issues and a framework to create a dynamic early care and education system that is responsive to the needs of all our state’s families and children. Connecticut needs an early childhood system that promotes healthy development from birth so that all of the families with young children in our state have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Connecticut has made significant progress in expanding early care and education, but far too many families still struggle to access affordable, high-quality early care and education. The very high cost of child care is burdensome to families: Only 1 in 4 families in Connecticut can afford child care, according to federal and state guidelines. Families with low incomes rely on the Care 4 Kids program to help pay for child care, which closed to new applicants in 2017 and left thousands of families without options. Although the program re-opened, the closure caused enrollment to drop significantly and currently remains underfunded. Disparities in access persist for infant and toddler care as well as access to preschool, which were compounded by the Care 4 Kids closure. To solve these problems, Connecticut must invest in a state-of-the-art infrastructure to promote early childhood development from birth. “We need a strong early childhood system so all children and families can thrive, and so we can support the future prosperity of our entire state,” says Stephanie Luczak, Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children.

The report proposes a series of solutions grounded in fundamental early childhood principles to build a strong early care and education system, including:

- Prioritizing investments that will improve the quality of early care and education programs, raise wages for early childhood educators, and fully fund Care 4 Kids.
- Expanding family supports, such as home visiting that promote healthy births and reduce risk factors.
- Providing the opportunity for families to support their newborns by implementing paid family and medical leave.
- Improving access to reliable and affordable infant and toddler care that meet families’ cultural, scheduling, and financial needs.
- Reducing disparities in access to preschool by implementing universal preschool.

“Investments in early childhood are investments in Connecticut’s social and economic future”, says Dr. Wendy Waithe Simmons, Director of Education and Equity at Connecticut Voices for Children. “Prioritizing the needs of Connecticut’s youngest children today is an investment in Connecticut’s citizens, workers, decision makers, and leaders of tomorrow.”

*About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, 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.*