

Education Committee

Public Testimony of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Manager and Alisha Soto, MSW Intern
March 6, 2019

Testimony in support of: SB 933: *An Act Expanding Eligibility for Certain Families in the Care4Kids Program* and SB 934: *An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program to Parents Enrolled in Other Types of School*

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-five years, CWEALF has advocated for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state and promote gender equity in the workplace.

CWEALF urges the committee to support S.B. 933: *An Expanding Eligibility for Certain Families in the Care4Kids Program* to expand eligibility for the Care4Kids program to families with a gross income of up to 75% of the median income and require advance notice regarding program eligibility.

Quality early care and education is critical for the healthy development of young children and the ability of parents, especially women, to participate fully in the workforce. Without the Care4Kids subsidy, however, child care is often too expensive for many families.

Research from New America the average cost of in-home, or "nanny care" in Connecticut is \$31,162 a year and the average cost of a day care center was \$11,456 per child per year. The average cost of childcare in Connecticut is \$19,521, or 28% of the median household income.ⁱ

Currently, in order to be eligible for the Care4Kids program a family must earn less than 50% of the state median income. According to United Way's 2018 Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) report, a family of four with two young children must earn \$78,984 annually to just barely meet a minimum household survival budget.ⁱⁱ In order to qualify for Care4Kids, however, a family of four must earn \$56,275 or less a year.ⁱⁱⁱ

The limited income guidelines of Care4Kids exclude families who earn income slightly more than the program's income threshold but continue to struggle to make ends meet. This forces families to make difficult decisions, such as whether to expand their time in the workforce and spend less time with their families, or cut back on hours and earnings in order to qualify for quality child care. For parents – especially women, who continue to shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities - to fully participate in the workforce, and for children to engage in the critical early learning experiences needed for healthy development, we must expand the income eligibility of Care4Kids.

CWEALF also supports S.B. 934: *An Act Expanding Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program to Parents Enrolled in Other Types of School* to expand eligibility in the Care4Kids program to parents enrolled in other types of school besides high school and require advance notice of expanded program eligibility. Senate Bill No. 935 will improve access to Care4Kids by expanding eligibility to include

parents who are also participating in English learning, GED preparation, job training, and higher education programs.

Seventy percent (70%) of jobs in Connecticut will require some form of postsecondary education or specialized training within the next 10 years. Access to quality and consistent child care is critical for parents, especially women, to fully take advantage of English Learning, GED completion, job training, college courses, and other educational supports.

When children receive high-quality, consistent care, their parents can participate fully in the postsecondary or specialized programs needed to secure sufficient wages and employment. Senate Bill No. 934 mirrors programs in 28 states that allow parents to receive child care assistance while earning up to a bachelor's degree. With S.B. 934, Connecticut will take the necessary steps to support non-TANF recipient parents who are working to complete a high school degree, GED, English learning, job training program or college to access Care4Kids.

CWEALF supports the important work of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliances and urges the committee support S.B. 933 and S.B. 934.

ⁱ <https://ctmirror.org/2016/09/30/average-child-care-in-ct-costs-as-much-as-in-state-college-tuition/>

ⁱⁱ http://alice.ctunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CT-United-Ways-2018-ALICE-Report-8.13.18_Hires-1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ctcare4kids.com/care-4-kids-program/income-guidelines/>