

Committee on Children

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

*S.B. 87: An Act Concerning Eligibility for the Office of Early Childhood's Child Care Subsidy Program
for Victims of Domestic Violence*

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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-six years, CWEALF has advocated for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state, promote gender equity in the workplace, and combat discrimination.

Through CWEALF's Legal Education Program, we also provide information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy to the Connecticut community to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice. The majority of CWEALF's clients are low-income women with at least one dependent. Many of CWEALF's clients experience domestic or intimate partner violence.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support *S.B. 87: An Act Concerning Eligibility for the Office of Early Childhood's Child Care Subsidy Program for Victims of Domestic Violence*, which will allow a victim of domestic violence to access Care 4 Kids.

For many survivors of domestic violence, concerns over their ability to provide financially for themselves or their children are a significant reason to stay in or return to an abusive relationship. When survivors of violence have access to resources that advance their economic security, including access to the social safety net, paid sick and safe days, safe housing, and affordable childcare, they and their families are much more likely to remain financially secure.

Due to lack of affordable child care options, domestic violence survivors often rely on their abusive partners or ex-partners, or the abuser's family members, to provide childcare, which places survivors in danger of further or increased physical and/or emotional abuse. Abusers may also intentionally cancel or change their plans to provide childcare as a tactic to interfere with the victim's work.

Many survivors of domestic violence remain in abusive relationships simply because they cannot afford to leave. Access to affordable and quality child care significantly increases victims' safety and stability. CWEALF urges the Committee to support *S.B. 87* and advance the economic security and safety of domestic violence survivors in our state.