



Connecticut Association for Human Services
237 Hamilton Street, Suite 208
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
860.951.2212
www.cahs.org

Elsa Núñez, President
Robert Blakey, CFO & Interim CEO

**Testimony before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee in Support of
S.B. 876 AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENTS, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER PURPOSES.**

March 15th, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas, Senator Witkos, Representative Davis and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 876 An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds Of The State For Capital Improvements, Transportation And Other Purposes.

My name is Kayla Goldfarb and I am a Policy Analyst for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit that works to reduce poverty and promote equity and economic success for children and families through both policy and program initiatives. CAHS wishes to express our particular appreciation for Sec. 50 of this bill, which would expand subsection (b) of Sec. 10-508 of the General Statute to enable the Office of Early Childhood to use the proceeds of the sale of bonds to provide for facility improvements to school readiness programs, state-funded day-care centers (CDCs), Even Start programs, programs administered by local and regional boards of education, and to expand the delivery of child care services to infants and toddlers where a demonstrated need exists.

As it stands, the General Statutes offer up to \$10 million annually in bonding to OEC, available only to Smart Start programs. Expanding bonding to other programs beyond Smart Start could free up important funding to support facility improvements in early childhood care and education programs around the state, and would help address our state's serious shortage of licensed, affordable, family-accessible child care. Across the state, 44% of people live in a "child care desert" where there is little or no access to quality child care.¹ This is a workforce issue, as well as a child-safety issue, as the lack of accessible, affordable child care means that many parents are pulled out of the workforce, or that children are placed in unregulated care.

According to OEC, Connecticut needs 51,000 more infant and toddler child care slots, including 30,000 more subsidized slots. Several issues make it less economically feasible for providers to operate infant and toddler classrooms, contributing to the profound shortage of regulated care for our youngest children. Because center-based infant and toddler classrooms are subject to higher child-staff ratio regulations, they are more expensive to run than preschool problems. Additionally, the Care4Kids program reimburses infant and toddler providers at the 4th percentile of the market rate, well-below the federally recommended 75th percentile of market rate. Finally, because infant and toddler rooms require particular set-up with changing tables and other age-appropriate facilities, child care providers may lack the financial incentives necessary to open up new infant and toddler classrooms.

Grant funds from the OEC could dramatically curb the costs to providers associated with renovating an empty classroom, or expanding existing facilities, and could offer the economic incentive they need to boost the supply

¹ Rasheed Malik and Katie Hamm, "Mapping America's Child Care Deserts" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017)



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of regulated infant and toddler slots. Meanwhile, facility improvements to school readiness programs, CDCs, and Even Start programs could support the quality of these critically important sources of quality child care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 876 An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds Of The State For Capital Improvements, Transportation And Other Purposes.