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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye
Commissioner

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner
Office of Early Childhood
Before the Human Services Committee
HB 6520 - An Act Concerning the Provision of Temporary State Services to
Victims of Domestic Violence
March 4, 2021**

Good morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify concerning H.B. 5306 – An Act Concerning Provision of Temporary State Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood advances a two-generation family-centered approach in our pursuit of optimal health, safety and learning outcomes for young children. Through our core programs, we support infant and toddler care, preschool, after-school care, child care and youth camp licensing, home visiting, and early intervention to address developmental delays. The Office of Early Childhood is working toward better coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.

We fully appreciate the intent of H.B. 6520. Victims of domestic violence are living in an extremely vulnerable situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated family situations, particularly where domestic violence is present. Child care provides a parent peace of mind that their child is in a safe and stable place. This bill would require that any person who applies for Care 4 Kids and has stated that they are a victim of domestic violence, in accordance with 17b-112a, income standards for determining eligibility is waived for at least 90 days, at which point income would be determined. The bill also requires that the OEC prioritize victims of domestic violence in the intake and eligibility process.

There are many other populations who are on our mind as we set policy, including families with young children experiencing homelessness, teen parents, and children with developmental needs, disabilities or health care needs. As we work to build a more integrated, coherent and inclusive child care system, we will do what we can to increase access for these populations and bring an equity lens to our policy decisions.

The language in SB 6520, as written, raises questions about how the Office of Early Childhood would be able to make a determination whether an individual is a victim of domestic violence. There

is concern that our agency does not have the expertise or resources to make that determination. We would be happy to further discuss this area of our concern.

This bill has significant fiscal implications. As the necessary fiscal resources are not included in the Governor's budget proposal, the OEC cannot support the bill.

Thank you for your time and attention. The Office of Early Childhood is committed to work together – with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates and parents - to better serve our families with young children.