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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 Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
H.B. 5115 - An Act Requiring a Plan to Increase the Number of Child Care Centers on or Near
Each Campus of the Regional Community-Technical Colleges and State Universities
March 8, 2022**

Good morning, Senator Slap, Representative Elliot, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Beth Bye. I am Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify concerning **H.B. 5115 - An Act Requiring a Plan to Increase the Number of Child Care Centers on or Near Each Campus of the Regional Community-Technical Colleges and State Universities.**

OEC supports the goal of this bill to increase the number of child care programs on or near community-technical colleges and state universities. Child care on campuses is an important resource to support student success. OEC, with Governor Lamont's support and approval, has assigned federal funding to help college students with the cost of child care by funding Care 4 Kids for students participating in higher education and workforce development activities. This is the first time in more than 30 years that Care 4 Kids eligibility has been open to higher education activities.

In addition, the Office of Early Childhood launched a College Lab School initiative in February of this year, which sends funding to child care programs on campuses designed to support teacher preparation and child development study. This is a two-year, \$4 million investment to support workforce development and use college lab schools as community-based professional development resources for the field.

We are happy to work with this committee to assure that this bill works with these efforts to support campus-based early childhood programs and child care for students.

Right now, child care is facing a workforce crisis and enrollment in early childhood education programs at colleges has dropped significantly. Early Childhood Education is a wonderful career path – and the field needs more high-quality teachers. I know it has been a wonderful career for me. As the field looks at potential significant federal investments for the child care industry, the need for early childhood professionals will increase. Therefore, a focus on campus programs is very timely.

Thank you for giving me the time to testify. We are happy to answer any questions and to meet with you to further discuss in efforts to pass the best bill possible.