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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Office of  
Early Childhood

Beth Bye  
Commissioner

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner  
Office of Early Childhood  
Before the General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee  
of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Tuesday, March 26, 2024**

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Good afternoon, Senator Moore, Representative Napoli, Senator Hwang, Representative Piscopo, and distinguished members of the General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am here today to testify about two bonding authorizations intended for child care facilities improvements.

The earliest years of a child's life shape who that child will grow up to be, affecting their future health, education, and success. The Office of Early Childhood focuses on children from birth to age 5. Helping young children learn, develop, and overcome barriers will have benefits that last a lifetime. A key part of our work is supporting the providers, teachers, and other professionals who have dedicated their careers to caring for and educating children.

Governor Lamont established the Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care 11 months ago and charged panel members with crafting a five-year plan to build an equitable, high-quality, and sustainable system that ensures that every child has a sound educational foundation that will prepare them to grow, learn, and succeed. The five-year plan provides a vision for Connecticut's child care infrastructure that will improve access to quality care for thousands of families through efforts aimed at affordability, stabilizing and expanding child care businesses, and improving the quality of programs. The plan was informed by thousands of providers, parents, businesses, and interested residents and evolved significantly.

There is an unallocated \$10 million and an authorized \$5 million in bond funds for the purpose of constructing, improving or equipping child care centers, including, but not limited to, payment of associated costs for architectural, engineering or demolition services related to infant and toddler pilot programs. There is also an unallocated \$45 million in Smart Start bond funds. The Lamont administration is committed to maintaining this combined \$60 million in bond funds to meet the capital needs of early childhood providers. These bond authorizations for child care facility improvements would build upon the \$15 million of ARPA funds for child care facilities that is included in our current year budget. There were 730 applications totaling \$73.8 million for

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facilities improvements, renovations, and new construction projects. Of those 730 applications, 125 of those projects will be funded, totaling approximately \$13.5 million.

The response to the program demonstrates the acute need for facility and infrastructure investment for our most vulnerable communities. Of the 730 applicants, 48 percent reported an Infant/Toddler waitlist, 88 percent reported serving families who receive a child care subsidy through the Care 4 Kids program, and 74 percent of applicants are located in high social vulnerability index (SVI) cities or towns.

In closing, I want to thank the legislature for its long-standing investment in our youngest children and their families. Our agency is committed to working together to better serve young children and their families.

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*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. OEC is working toward better-coordinated, cost-effective services that support Connecticut's youngest children and families.*