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Testimony before the Human Services Committee Re: H.B. 5619

My name is Sherry Linton, the Early Care and Education Policy Analyst of Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), which is dedicated to ending poverty in Connecticut and ensuring that all families have the tools they need to achieve economic security. I am here to testify in favor of H.B. 5619, supporting the raising of Care4 Kids provider reimbursement rates to a level equivalent to the seventy-fifth percentile weekly rate of the cost of providing child care services, as determined by the most recent child care market rate survey.

- First, I would like to thank the Committee for raising this bill in acknowledgement of the need to bring Connecticut's reimbursement rates in alignment with the federal recommendations.
- In accordance with federal law, the state should not just be conducting market rate surveys, but also ensuring that the data is purposeful in setting reimbursement rates, as intended by the federal mandate.
- Connecticut has continued to reimburse Care 4 Kids providers using the market rates established from 2001, under the guise that the 60th percentile is sufficient to provide equal access to care. The use of the outdated market rates have been justified by the rationale that increase utilization of care directly correlates with equal access, when in fact increased utilization is an outcome of increased demand for families to be working.
- Second, I would like to stress the overdue positive impact that raising the reimbursement rates will have on increasing access of working families to quality care. With the raising costs of living, providers have been consistently forced to absorb the expenses of providing services to an extent that have been jeopardizing their existence. As a facilitator of a Providers' Caucus and a participant of the Care 4 Kids Advisory Council I have heard the limitations that low reimbursements place on providing care. The financial burdens are often shifted to the employees of these agencies in the form of increased cost of benefits, decreasing number of children serviced, etc. The increased rates will assist providers to adequately provide child care services and more readily accept those that need their services.
- Finally, CAHS and the Early Care Alliance are advocating for comprehensive legislative review of CT's Early Care and Education programs in hopes of minimizing the silos and inconsistencies in services based on funding streams. Our goal should be parity of quality services and reimbursements for all programs including Care 4 Kids, School Readiness, Head Start, and State Funded Centers.

