



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 408, An Act Establishing A Small Business Child Care Incentive Program**

**Commerce Committee
March 15, 2022**

Good afternoon, Senator Hartley, Representative Currey, Senator Martin, Representative Buckbee and distinguished members of Commerce Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit testimony **in support of Senate Bill 408, An Act Establishing A Small Business Child Care Incentive Program.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets. In the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$97 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$894 million since its founding in 1925.

In Greater Hartford, there are a number of good paying jobs available, but there is misalignment between the skillsets required and the skills of the current workforce. The Foundation's efforts focus on preparation, hiring and retention of residents with significant barriers to employment, including returning citizens and youth disconnected from school and work. This work includes 2Gen programs that take a family-centered approach and considers childcare and supports for both the parents and children, allowing parents to focus on their education and job training.

Public commitment must address the interplay of basic human needs including access to food, mental and physical health care services, housing, childcare, and other needs, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations providing these services.

Since 1987, the Foundation has invested more than \$40 million in early childhood development across the Greater Hartford area. The Foundation has supported early childhood policy, funding, and program quality, recognizing their importance in ensuring optimal safety and learning outcomes for children and pathways to economic security for their families and caregivers. As part of its COVID response efforts, the Foundation has provided support to childcare providers, including assistance in applying for federal Paycheck Protection Program funds that have struggled to maintain services. It is our goal to ensure that *all* children, especially those most vulnerable, have access to high quality early childhood experiences.

In January 2016, the Foundation launched the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) that integrated education programs, support services, and career development to assist adult learners and expand their academic and job skill levels as a way of reaching self-sufficiency. CPI included an [extensive evaluation](#) of its various programs and outlined some of the challenges and success of the initiative. One of the key findings was that **childcare was the most frequent and costliest barrier to address**. While several of the CPI programs included support for childcare, it ultimately remained a significant barrier to employment.



The Foundation offers its support of **Senate Bill 408 which would require the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, in consultation with the Office of Early Childhood and the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority, to develop and implement a small business childcare incentive program to promote the expansion of existing childcare centers and the development of new childcare centers in the state.**

We appreciate the legislature's recognition of the vital role childcare plays in supporting working families and the need to support and enhance our existing childcare system to ensure that all Connecticut families have access to quality, affordable childcare.

The Foundation is eager to partner with legislators, advocates and businesses to eliminate barriers to employment for Black and Latinx residents to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to participate in the workforce and every family has access to quality affordable childcare.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfp.org or 860-548-1888.