



Hartford Foundation

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**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 487, An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and
Family Support Initiative**

**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
March 30, 2022**

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, Senator Martin, Representative Cheeseman and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit testimony **on Senate Bill 487, An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative.**

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.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and achieve equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latinx communities, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase stable employment opportunities for Black and Latinx adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment.** In Greater Hartford, there are a number of good paying jobs available, but access to affordable, quality childcare remains a barrier for many working parents. The Foundation's efforts focus on preparation, hiring and retention of residents with significant barriers to employment. 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.

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.

Ensuring that *all* children, especially those most vulnerable, have access to high quality early childhood experiences is a critical step to removing this barrier to employment. 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 awarded financial support to childcare providers, including assistance in applying for federal Paycheck Protection Program funds.



The Foundation offers its support for Senate Bill 487 which seeks to make long-term state investments in much needed childcare for infants and toddlers.

We know that early care is the most challenging to obtain and also the most expensive, creating a significant barrier for working families. By utilizing existing tax revenue that the Revenue Cap currently sends to the state's robust rainy day fund, this bill would annually deposit \$300 to \$500 million into a new, non-lapsing account known as the Early Care and Family Support account. These funds would make it possible to **provide care for 10,000 to 15,000 infants and toddlers - the most critical gap in our early childcare system. This bill would prioritize new childcare slots to lower income communities and those with childcare deserts.**

The Foundation also supports the bill's inclusion of family childcare providers in addition to support for center and group care. Home-based childcare centers play a vital role in solving the dire shortage of childcare for infants and toddlers, care that is linguistically and culturally appropriate as well as available during nontraditional hours.

In addition, the Foundation applauds the Senate Bill 487's proposal to ensure that pay for providers would increase from the 50th percentile of the most recent market study to the 75th percentile.

Providing increases in pay rates will expand the number of participating providers who may have previously been unable to afford to provide infant and toddler care.

Finally, the Foundation applauds the proposal's allocation of 10 percent of the childcare grant to pay for family support services. Ensuring that the whole family receives the supports they need is vital to ensuring the health growth and stability of young children.

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@hfpg.org or 860-548-1888.