



## Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

### **REOPEN CARE4KIDS**

Care4Kids, Connecticut's child care subsidy program makes it possible for parents to work by helping them with the high cost of childcare. Demand for the program forced the Care4kids into deficit and resulted in a phase closure of the program. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, it is closed to all new applicants except those leaving the TANF program. There are over 2,500 on the waiting list with 500 to 600 being added each month. Without child care, parents in low-wage jobs either cannot work or must find cheap, often illegal and poor quality, child care. These changes are also causing instability in our child care infrastructure. The Alliance urges an increase in funding in order to reopen the Care4Kids program.

### **MAINTAIN BUDGETS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

Flat funding, rescissions, and budget cuts over recent years have put great strain on the early childhood system. Community programs that serve our most at-risk babies, toddlers and preschoolers are barely making it. They keep going, usually at the expense of staff. Early childhood teachers are paying the price. The state's commitment to ensuring children are healthy, safe and ready for school success requires that programs serving our youngest children are funded at levels that meet the demand for services AND allow for teachers and staff to earn a living wage.

### **FIX THE EDUCATIONAL MANDATE FOR EARLY EDUCATORS**

Current law requires 50% of lead teacher in state funded early care and education programs to have a Associates Degree in Early Childhood and 50% of have a BA by July 2017. By 2020 all lead teachers must have a BA. There is no way that we will meet either of those deadlines. Only 5 colleges are approved to grant the required BA's in CT and the process to have a degree approved from any other college is far too onerous.

### **CREATE A REFUNDABLE TAX CREDIT FOR EARLY EDUCATORS**

Provide tax relief to under paid early educators based on Associates and Bachelors degree attainment.

### **IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Social, emotional, and behavioral issues in very young children are on the rise. Screening and early intervention are powerful strategies for detection and treatment of children with, and at risk, for problems and delays. It is estimated that 10% of 1 to 2 year olds exhibit social-emotional delays; 10-15% of 2 to 3 year olds exhibit behavioral concerns. Yet, currently, only about 30% of children's delays are detected before kindergarten. We must improve early screening, and once screened, there must be an increase in available intervention services for young children.

### **CREATE PARITY IN THE FINANCING OF STATE SUBSIDIZED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Connecticut has seven state funded child care and early education programs: Public Schools, Magnet and Charter Schools, School Readiness, Smart Start, State Funded Child Development Centers, State Funded Head Start, and Federal Preschool Development Programs. The financing of these programs is highly unequal; the Alliance urges the legislature to move towards parity in funding.