

PA10-061

SB391

House	4161-4165	5
Human Serv.	1394-1396, 1407-1416, 1419-1421, 1463-1468, 1523-1528, 1542-1546, 1593-1598, 1674-1680	46
Senate	1799-1804, 1881-1882	8
		59

H – 1085

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2010**

**VOL.53
PART 13
3923 – 4245**

And so -- one minute please --

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The chamber stand at ease for a second.

Representative Merrill, for what purpose do you rise?

REP. MERRILL (54th):

Mr. Speaker, I would make a motion that we pass this item temporarily.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Without any objection, this item is passed temporarily.

The chamber will stand at ease.

Will the chamber please come back to order.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 470.

THE CLERK:

On page 28, Calendar 470, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM, favorable report of the Committee on Human Services.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The honorable vice-chair of the Human Services Committee, Representative Abercrombie, you have the floor madam.

pat/mb/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

587
May 3, 2010

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd):

Good evening, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move for the acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report in concurrence with the Senate and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The question before the Chamber is acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate.

Will you remark, madam?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has an amendment, previously designated Senate Amendment "A." I ask him to call LCO 4268.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 4268 to be -- previously designated Senate Amendment "A?"

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4268, Senate "A," offered by Senator Doyle and Representatives Walker, Abercrombie and Bye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The gentle lady has asked leave of the chamber to summarize Senate "A."

Is there any objection? Is there any objection?

If not, madam, please summarize Senate "A."

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, currently under the Care 4 Kids Program redetermination is done every six months. What this redetermination is going to change is to every eight months and we're looking at potential cost savings by changing to eight months. It also requires that any changes in eligibility that the providers and participants be notified of those changes and nothing to go into effect before 30 days.

I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Question before the Chamber is adoption of Senate "A." Will you remark? Will you remark on Senate Amendment Schedule "A?"

If not, I'll try your minds.

All those in favor of Senate "A," please signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

All those opposed nay.

The ayes have it. Senate "A" is adopted.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended? Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, will staff and guests come to the well of the House? Will the Representatives please take their seats? The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:...

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Will the members please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast? If all the members have voted the machine will be locked. Will the Clerk please take and announce the tally?

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 391 as amended by Senate "A" in concurrence with the Senate.

pat/mb/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

590
May 3, 2010

Total number voting	147
Necessary for passage	74
Those voting Yea	147
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	4

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The bill passes in concurrence with the
Senate.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 197?

THE CLERK:

On page 38, Calendar 197, Substitute for House
Bill Number 5302, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM
REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE'S
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING AN ACTION PLAN TO
IMPROVE FAMILY PRESERVATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS,favorable report of the Committee on
Appropriations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER McCLUSKEY:

The honorable chair of the Program Review and
Investigations Committee, Representative Mushinsky,
you have the floor, madam.

REP. MUSHINSKY (85th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move acceptance of the joint committee's

S - 603

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2010**

**VOL. 53
PART 6
1609 - 1919**

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 15

marked go. And Mr. President, calendar page 40,
Calendar 429, Senate Bill number 379 is marked go.

Mr. President that will, that concludes our
markings at this time. We will have additional items
to mark later including a few committee referrals.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Clerk, would you please call the first order
of the day.

THE CLERK:

Calling from the Senate Calendar for Thursday,
April 29, 2010, favorable reports calendar page eight,
matter marked order of the day Calendar 269, file 402,

Senate Bill 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE

SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE FOR KIDS
PROGRAM, favorable report of the Committee on Human
Services.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Sir.

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 16

SENATOR DOYLE:

I move acceptance of the Committee's joint favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Acting on acceptance and adoption of the bill.

Sir, would you like to remark further?

SENATOR DOYLE:

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President.

This bill deals with, the file copy deals with our current Care for Kids Program. The file copy sought to expedite the processing of the application and providing other services. Before I get into the final version of the bill, I'd like to call an amendment because it supersedes some of the file copy.

So the Clerk has an amendment, LCO 4268. Would the Clerk please call and I be allowed to summarize?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO 4268 to be designated Senate Amendment
Schedule A as offered by Senator Doyle of the 9
District.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Doyle.

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 17

SENATOR DOYLE:

Thank you, Mr. President.

First I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Sir.

SENATOR DOYLE:

Thank you, Mr. President.

What the amendment does is it adds new language that basically requires the Department to publish and to send notice to the program participants and providers and post on its website any major changes to the Care for Kids Program which really means if there are reductions or changes to the program. It also revises the file copy language in terms of the processing of the applications.

The file copy required DSS to process it within or its agents to process within five days. This deletes the section of five days but does basically request or order DSS to after qualification of the Care for Kids Program the current law is you're qualified for six months. This amendment would extend it to eight months.

It also provides that the commissioner shall provide a report after a certain time to provide

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 18

details to Human Services and Appropriations regarding how the new eight month period operates. And I urge the Chamber to accept the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Sir.

Will you remark further?

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you a question to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Through you, Mr. President, just looking at the fiscal note to this amendment it seems to say that there is a potential impact to the State budget for 2011. And I'm kind of reading this real time. If the good Senator could address the fiscal impact of the amendment. Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 19

Yes. Through you, Mr. President. While I do recognize that the fiscal note does say that I really think that could be superseded by the ability of the DSS Agency to operate. And actually the costs were to exceed the budgeted amount they could ultimately, you know, stop the program or curb the program.

So really, I think although it's true it's possible it could rise up but with proper management by DSS and proper planning they would be able to close the program if the money's no longer there. Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. And through you. It seems that the first section of the amendment would not have any fiscal impact. It just has to deal with actually posting things on the internet. And it seems that it's the frequency of redeterminations from one year to eight months that may have the impact. So, I think I'm satisfied in looking at this that Senator Doyle's correct.

Depending on the specific actions of DSS this may have a fiscal impact to the State but won't

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 20

necessarily. I think he's correct in that. And I thank the good Senator for the answer to my question.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further on Senate A? Will you remark further? If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor please signify by saying aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed nay.

The ayes have it. The amendment passes. Will you remark further on Senate Bill 391 as amended by Senate A? Will you remark further?

Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

If there's no objection, I'd recommend the bill be placed in the consent calendar, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

There's a motion on the floor to place this item on consent. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. Clerk, please call the second order of the day please.

THE CLERK:

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 97

Mr. President, those items placed on the first consent calendar begin on calendar page one. Calendar number 497, substitute for House Joint Resolution number seven.

Calendar 498, House Joint Resolution number 14. Calendar page two, Calendar 499, House Joint Resolution number 15. Calendar 500, House Joint Resolution number 19. Calendar 501, House Joint Resolution number 27. Calendar 502, House Joint Resolution number 45. And Calendar 503, House Joint Resolution number 48. Calendar page three, Calendar 112, substitute for Senate Bill 264. Calendar page eight, Calendar number 269, substitute for Senate Bill 391. Calendar page 22, Calendar number 45, substitute for Senate Bill 31. Calendar page 29, Calendar number 179, Senate Bill 67. Calendar page 36, Calendar number 268, substitute for Senate Bill 315.

Mr. President that completes the items placed on the first consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The Senate is now voting by roll call on the consent calendar. Will all Senators please return to

law/gbr
SENATE

April 29, 2010 98

the chamber. The Senate is now voting by roll on the consent calendar. Will all Senators please return to the chamber.

THE CHAIR:

Have all Senators voted? If all Senators have voted please check your vote. The machine will be locked. The Clerk will call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Motion is on adoption of consent calendar number one.

Total number Voting	35
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

Consent calendar one passes.

At this time I will entertain a point of personal privilege.

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you; Mr. President.

A few minutes ago when we were doing points of personal privilege a number of Senators recognized their interns. Well my intern was hard at work. So,

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**HUMAN
SERVICES
PART 4
1072 – 1435**

2010

Any other questions from committee members?

Thank you very much, Representative.

REP. HWANG: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Commissioner Starkowski, and then Deb Polun, hopefully. It depends. It depends. I may ask you to go to public, who knows.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Michael Starkowski. I'm the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services.

I submitted some lengthy testimony on a number of bills. I'll try to be as brief as possible to go over what my testimony says.

Bill Number 370, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID LONG-TERM CARE COVERAGE FOR MARRIED COUPLES. Section 1 would change the disregard to the maximum allowed by federal law, which is \$109,560. We already have a disregard where we disregard one-half of a married couple's assets for the benefit of the noninstitutional spouse of a long-term care Medicaid applicant.

That does go up to the maximum of \$109,560, but, of course, that's the maximum, so people could have a disregard that's less than that. If we automatically move up to the \$109,560, that change in a disregard would mean that people would be able to divert funds that are presently used to pay for long-term care services. If they do that, it would result in earlier findings of Medicaid eligibility and

SB391
HB5296
HB5398
HB5399
HB5411
HB5412
HB5431
SB282

increase the Medicaid costs to the state. For those reasons, we're opposed to that section.

Section 2 would exclude funds derived from equity in the home property through a reverse annuity mortgage loan or other home equity conversion loan in determining Medicaid eligibility. We actually are -- are supportive of that section.

We feel that it could actually help people that are applying for the home- and community-based waiver and allow them to have more dollars available at their discretion to keep their loved ones in the community instead of going into institutionalization and on Medicaid as -- as a Medicaid recipient in a still nursing facility, although we do think there's one technical change.

The technical change is it shouldn't be disregarded as income, it should be disregarded as assets, because after the first month, if there's any dollars left on that reverse mortgage, they're considered assets, and that's what impacts the eligibility for the Medicaid recipient.

S.B. 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM. This act would require that we make an eligibility determination within 30 days of any application that comes in in the Care 4 Kids Program. The way the program operates now, that's our goal: to try to make sure that those applicants are determined either eligible or ineligible within the 30 days.

Understand that the applicants have to provide quite a few -- quite a few pieces of information -- a birth certificate for their

children, pay stubs. They have to get verification from their provider that they're going to provide the hours of care while the individual is working. We have to get verification of the work hours for the individual.

Sometimes that process takes more than 30 days since there are submissions that have to come from the applicants and from the providers. In the event that we were required to make that determination within 30 days, we'd literally be determining people ineligible at the end of that 30 days. They would then be required to submit another application, and those first 30 days in the original application would not be covered.

The way the process works now, if the application goes over 30 days because we're still waiting for information from the client, we still go back to the initial date of that application to reimburse the provider for services if we determine that the individual is eligible.

5296, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF MEDICAL NECESSITY. The bill before you is based on an earlier definition that was worked on by the Medical Inefficiency Committee. There is a subsequent version of the definition of "medical necessity" that we would support. We would like to work with members of the committee to have that new definition put into this bill.

AN ACT CONCERNING A PILOT PROGRAM TO TRANSFER HOSPITAL PATIENTS WHO RECEIVE MEDICAID BENEFITS TO NURSING HOMES IN A TIMELY MANNER. As you may know, we -- we do have a requirement to do preadmission screening for individuals that go into nursing homes. If

HB5398

REP. ORANGE: Right. Section 1 -- is the state of Connecticut meeting the guidelines of the federal government?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes, we are.
Yes.

REP. ORANGE: You're sure?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. ORANGE: Then you don't get a gold star for that one, but you do get a gold star for the reverse mortgage, Mike.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Okay, thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Representative Abercrombie.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Commissioner. Thank you for being here. I actually have three questions.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Okay.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: My first question has to do with the Care 4 Kids Program. SB391

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Can you explain the process and why it takes longer than 30 days, because one of the things that we're hearing from the providers is that they help the recipients with the application so that you would think that they'd be a little bit fluent in what they're doing.

And they take those children from the first day on, so if they don't get notice until three months later that these kids have -- are going to be accepted into the program, that's three months that they've put this expense out. So can you kind of go through what the process is and why it takes longer than a month?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes. First of all, we get about 1500 applications a month. And as you know, the applications go to United Way. United Way is our contracted vendor to move through the application process and determine the eligibility for the Care 4 Kids Program.

United Way actually has a number of automated pieces in place that actually are much more beneficial to moving the process through than we do internally at DSS. They have a document imaging system, so when a client sends through the information, they image the document, and that document gets attached to the individual's file.

What -- what happens in a number of situations -- understand the information has to come from the provider, and information has to come from the client. So the client has to provide a birth certificate.

We provide -- I mean, the client has to provide on paystubs, so the client may provide some paystubs that says that -- that over an equivalent of one week -- and it doesn't have the work hours on the paystub, because most paystubs will probably have aggregate hours -- but we have to verify is the client working in the morning? Is the client working in the afternoon? Are they working three days a

week? So then we could match up the daycare that we're going to pay for.

In those situations, where the clientele -- as I said, sets aggregate hours, and the paystub says 22 hours in the week. They then have to go back to the employer, and the employer, then, will work with them, and United Way will work with the employer, and the employer will then have to send a verification and say, "The 22 hours worked by this individual are a half a day every day for five days a week."

So there's three different entities in that case that would be involved. We have to get information from the provider. The provider tries as best they can to try to get us that information as quickly as possible. The individual tries to get us that information.

We actually send them out a -- a checklist with the application, and what we have on the application is -- at points where they're going to have to provide some documentation, we have a little icon on the application itself. And we say to them, "A reminder -- you have to provide substantiation of this."

So it's -- it's not an easy process. It does take time for the individual to get that documentation from their employer. In a lot of situations, those employers may be big employers. It could be a chain drugstore. It could be a Walmart. It could be a chain provider. And trying to get that information and make sure that the -- the employer is willing to provide that information to another entity sometimes is difficult.

So what we don't want to do is we don't want to be put in the situation that at the end of 30 days, United Way, as an agent of the

department, is responsible for either accepting everything that's there and saying the person is ineligible because a piece of paper is missing, because we don't want to put the provider then -- the provider would then have a liability of providing the services for that first month and no method of reimbursement.

We think the process moves through as best we can. We understand that it -- right now, it takes over 30 days in a number of situations. But we're trying to move that process through as quickly as we can with United Way. And it's difficult sometimes for the bits of information they have to provide to us.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So is -- do we have a formula that we use for each participant to know what the -- what the reimbursement is going to be? Because one of the things that I'm hearing from the provider is that they'll call and they'll hear from one person that the person -- that the child has been accepted into the program. Okay? --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: -- into the Care 4 Kids. But they can't tell them how much the reimbursement is going to be. It has to go to another department. So can you kind of talk what the steps are and is there -- I mean, there's got to be an easier way that these providers can kind of know approximately what's going to come in.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: It goes through an automated system at United Way, so United Way will run the hours of work and the hours that the individual is in daycare, and then they will determine what the reimbursement is

going to be. So it's -- it's not something that's going to be a standardized system where if -- if a worker because of -- remember, a lot of the clients that we're serving in this program are part-time workers.

So their hours may fluctuate or their hours may be a fairly reduced number of hours instead of the standard 40 or 20 hours a week. So it's difficult for the provider to -- to know how -- what they're going to actually get paid for. We try to work as best as we can with the providers to provide them advance information if we -- if we have certified what the work hours are.

And understand, an individual may choose to -- to say that they want the child to stay at the daycare facility for three hours more a day because they have other things to do or they -- they need that downtime for something or they -- you know.

So it's -- our reimbursement is going to be correlated to the hours of work that the individual needs that daycare. So it's difficult sometimes for the daycare centers.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So the daycare centers, when they call to find out what the reimbursement is going to be, they're calling someone at 2-1-1?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: 2-1-1.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: That's who their contact is?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: 2-1-1 is their contact, yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So they should be able to tell them what it is if that --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: -- it doesn't have to go to another department.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes. If -- if we've got enough information to make that determination.

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Go ahead, Toni, you want to ask him?

REP. WALKER: What do you mean by enough information? What's -- what has to be included in order for them to get that determination?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Well, we need to know what the hours of work are. United Way needs to know what the -- because remember this is on a sliding scale for what the parent share is going to be, so we have to run through or United Way has to run that through to determine what the parent share is going to be based on their income, based on their hours of work. And those are -- and based on the actual income, based on the paystubs.

So those are the critical pieces that have to go together, and we may not have all that information. As soon as we have that information, we then identify or we notify the -- the provider what the parent share is going to be and what the state's liability is going to be for those clients.

Sorry.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: There's got to be a smoother transition than that -- than the process that we have in place right now, because, you know, from the provider's point of view -- I mean, if they feel that they have given all the information, and granted, sometimes pieces of information can be left out, but these providers live off of this. They're small businesses, you know, so they -- they count on this money.

And -- and I have to say in their defense, I'm sure they're giving everything that's on that checklist, and even with everything on that checklist, from the providers I've talked to, they don't get notified any sooner than at least two months out. So I mean -- and granted, maybe part of it was the closing, which I think --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: -- we all think was a really bad idea, but you know, there's got to be a better way of doing this, and that's why, you know, if you can give us any insight into another way of doing this bill that we can help these providers more in a shorter period of time, we're open to it.

But I mean, I think the turnaround period -- you know, if they're giving you all the information -- so 30 days should be sufficient.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Representative Abercrombie, we'll -- we'll commit to meet with the providers, and we'll work with them. We -- we have a group of providers we meet with now. We'll talk to them and try to find out what the issue is.

This bill is actually detrimental to providers, because if the client has to -- if we have to determine them either eligible or ineligible at the end of 30 days, and we don't have a piece of information that's critical to determine the eligibility, we're going to determine them ineligible, and that first month of services the provider would be -- we wouldn't have any mechanism to reimburse the provider for that first month of services.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Well, if -- if you look at the language, that's why we put "approved applicant," meaning that all the information was there, so they weren't missing any pieces of the puzzle.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: I know, but -- but at the end of 30 days, we're then going to be required in this legislation to either approve it or deny it, so if we deny it because there's a piece of information missing -- let's say the employer didn't send in the schedule of hours, so we know that they worked 20 hours a week, but we don't know if it's afternoons, mornings or what. We don't have a verification of that.

At the end of that 30 days, we're going to deny the application because we can't approve it without that verification of what the hours are. So what's --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So you're going to make them start over again at that point?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: They'd have to. They'd have to. They'd be required to start all over again. So if they -- if they started all over again, that's -- that's their new date as the first date of the next month where the provider can get reimbursed.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: But the language that we --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: We're not trying to --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: But the language that we --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: We're not trying to penalize the providers, that's for sure.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: No, but the language we put was "approved." We understand if they're missing something, they'd still be in the pipeline. It doesn't mean that it has to be approved within the first month -- the 30 days. Do you see? If they're missing parts of the package that you need -- right, the clock -- the clock doesn't start until you get an approved application, everything is there. That's what we're trying to get to.

The ones where you have all the pieces of the puzzle, we -- we would like to see them -- a turnaround of 30 days. We're not talking about the people that miss pieces, and we understand that happens, but overall, what we're hearing from the providers is they're giving you everything that they -- that you request, and they're still waiting two, three months.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: And that may be true from the provider's perspective. I mean, because everything -- remember, there's more than one entity that's going to give us information. The client may not have -- have given us the birth certificate yet. So the provider has given us everything that they need to give us. They're -- they're correct. They're absolutely right.

The employer may not have -- have done a verification for us. So from the provider's perspective, they've complied with everything. They've provided the services, and they're questioning, "Why -- why haven't I gotten paid?" You know, this is a situation that's not too dissimilar to other situations where there's a number of entities involved, and if you comply, you think that everyone else is complying.

And that -- that happens in nursing homes too. You know, but -- so this situation -- we'll -- we'll meet with the providers. We think the way the language is crafted now, it could actually be detrimental to providers, but we can work with you on language.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay, we appreciate that and we'll accept that.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Okay.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Mr. Chair, can I have two more questions? Is that okay?

SENATOR DOYLE: Sure. Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: My second question has to do with podiatry. My understanding is that the Office of Legislative Research did a report back in 2006 that said eliminating podiatry did not save any money. Can you comment on that?

HB 5411

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: You know, I don't -- I don't remember that report being issued. It -- it may have been issued in 2006. Even on my way in the building today, I heard that from people that podiatry hasn't saved any money. In fact, it did -- may have cost us money. If we can see that

if I -- if someone's going to put a lien against my house for something and I was paying my child support and everything --

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Okay.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: -- that I was supposed to, I think that's where this -- this bill came from, so if you could help us with that, we'd greatly appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes. If that's the intent of the language, we'll work with you on some.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay. Great.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Any other -- Representative Johnston.

REP. JOHNSTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioner, I was trying to follow all the conversation on Senate Bill 391 and the Care 4 Kids.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. JOHNSTON: Are there two different components to submitting the information -- one set of data that needs to be submitted by the provider and then additional information submitted directly by the client?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes. And it's -- and in most situations --

REP. JOHNSTON: And is there confidentiality reasons that the client can't provide all of that to the provider and then the provider can provide us one full and complete package?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: I think -- and I think we have better success since the provider knows that their payment is contingent on providing the information.

REP. JOHNSTON: Correct.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: They have more success if the provider provides it to us directly.

REP. JOHNSTON: And are -- and are you finding the difficulty with applications that aren't complete is a lack of information coming from the client versus lack of information coming from the provider?

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: In most situations, yes, it's either a lack of information coming from the -- the client or employer-related information.

REP. JOHNSTON: Are there circumstances where some providers get all of the information directly from the client and they then submit that themselves directly on behalf of the client? It seems that that might be a more efficient process.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: I think there are right now, but I can't tell you whether that's 20 percent of the -- of the caseload or 5 percent of the caseload.

REP. JOHNSTON: And again, your reading of the language of that bill, your determination is that if we don't -- if we adopt it as it is, that in the long run, it will be detrimental, because there's going to be cases where you're going to be forced at the point in time -- at -- at an arbitrary point in time to either

make a decision to accept it or reject, and if there's information lacking, then you're given no choice but to reject, and therefore the clock then starts ticking again, and meanwhile that provider may have been providing services for 30 days and they're not going to get any reimbursement.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: That -- that's our reading. That's right.

REP. JOHNSTON: Okay, thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Representative Walker.

REP. WALKER: Thank you.

And good afternoon, sir.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Good afternoon.

REP. WALKER: I -- first of all, I just want to say that I am just amazed at your wealth of knowledge. You seem to be able to rattle all -- I mean, you get a little coaching from Claudette, but you -- you seem to hold your own very well.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Thank you.

REP. WALKER: I have a question on 5412, the idea of moving the DSH funds.

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL STARKOWSKI: Yes.

REP. WALKER: We had talked about this at length at a smaller group at one time, because we were trying to offset the budget neutrality needed if we moved the SAGA clients, correct?

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**HUMAN
SERVICES
PART 5
1436 – 1781**

2010

stuck in with the reimbursement in both the hospital and the nursing home.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any other questions from committee members?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

JOHN TARUTIS: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Maggie Adair, Adair, sorry, Sharon Pope and Evelyn Barnum and Randi Mezzy. Where's Maggie? Maggie? Thank you.

MAGGIE ADAIR: Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Maggie Adair. I'm Deputy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services. I am testifying on Senate Bill 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM.

This new bill -- the new bill language captures the reasonable timeline that's already established in the Care 4 Kids regulations for an application to be processed in 30 days. Unfortunately, staffing and backlog issues have resulted in applications not being touched or even responded to within 30 days, which in turn results in a processing period that often exceeds 60 to 90 days.

I've talked with DSS, actually today, and they have confirmed that really there is an inadequate staffing at the United Way of Connecticut to deal with the applications, particularly the large backlogs caused by the

program closure from June -- May 2009 to November 2009.

We're also very happy to hear that the DSS commissioner would be willing for DSS to sit down with providers to talk about this application process to see if we could find some solutions. CAHS can be -- it's the provider's caucus. It's a coalition of early care and education providers so we could bring people to the table.

We also with Commissioner Starkowski that the current new bill language could be construed that DSS would be required to deny an application if it wasn't completed in 30 days, so I think that language needs to be reworked.

CAHS, in the Connecticut Voices for Children -- we recommend two additions to this bill that we would think would make significant improvements to the Care 4 Kids program. I'll go as quickly as I can.

The first one, as long as there is demand under current eligibility requirements, the full amount appropriated by the Legislature for this line item should be expended.

Number two, the Department of Social Services can restrict eligibility if and only if it appears that demand will exceed the program's appropriation for the fiscal year, and when that happens, DSS must provide 60 days' notice before any changes go into effect.

On the first issue, the Legislator budgeted \$103.87 million for FY10 to Care 4 Kids based on the level of demand and spending in FY09. However, DSS plans to only spend \$93 million. That's the maintenance of effort to keep the \$13 million in the ARRA funds in tact.

That means ten -- the 93 to 103 -- that means \$10 million that was appropriated by the state Legislature will not be used to help parents gain access to child care and enable them to work.

The Legislature approved the 103 based on demand and understanding the importance of providing quality childcare. The legislative intent should be respected.

On number two, about the 60-day notice. When the program was abruptly closed in May 2009, providers and parents were given less than 24-hour notice of the closure. In fact, it was seven hours' notice. This is not reasonable.

Especially during these financially taxing times when childcare providers are struggling to keep their programs open, it is a reasonable ask for DSS to give providers ample notice that they can plan accordingly for the prospective loss in income of the childcare subsidies. It is also reasonable to give low-income parents time to adjust to a program closure or change in eligibility criteria.

And finally, I want to talk about the closing and reopening of the Care 4 Kids program. It has been haphazard and lacks a data-driven approach. As a result of the six-month closure, the reduction in spending was apparently higher than they expected.

DSS originally planned to close the program in February of this year. Now they plan to keep it open to June 2010. And that's good for parents and providers, but it shows a lack of not knowing how -- how the program is being

expended. And it shows that they really didn't need to close it in May of last year.

So DSS is -- is anticipating that it will spend less than the \$93 million by the end of June, possibly as much as \$9 million less. If the state cannot spend that money, it risks losing the entire \$13 million in ARRA funds, 11 million of which was already expended in FY09. I made a mistake in my testimony. I said FY10.

So we support the overall intent of this bill spotlighting the need for policies and regulations to be enforced as practice. We hope that you will consider our recommendations.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Representative Abercrombie.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Did you say in your testimony that you agreed with Mike Starkowski in the interpretation of it that -- that it would?

MAGGIE ADAIR: I -- I do. The way it --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay.

MAGGIE ADAIR: -- and -- and we -- a couple of us talked about it. The way it is written, it could be construed --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay.

MAGGIE ADAIR: -- it would be actually bad for -- bad for providers and parents, that it might -- could be construed legally that DSS would be required to deny the application

because it -- it went past the 30-day application. So I think it just needs some slight rewording.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay, and is that -- I'm sorry, I can't find your testimony here -- is that -- the rewording in your testimony?

MAGGIE ADAIR: That -- the rewording is not in the testimony --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Oh, okay.

MAGGIE ADAIR: -- because we kind of came -- we were grappling with this as late as yesterday afternoon.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay. Can you -- could you send us --

MAGGIE ADAIR: Yes, we can.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So that's the --

MAGGIE ADAIR: Because -- because in the regulations, it has very similar wording around a 30-day --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Yes.

MAGGIE ADAIR: -- but then it has additional language after, which clarifies after 30 days, DSS is required within ten days, if there's missing documentation, to give -- to send the -- to the parents notice that there is missing documentation. The parents then have ten days to respond. So without those --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Oh, okay.

MAGGIE ADAIR: -- other sentences, it -- it changes the meaning of this -- of this sentence.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: So we need like those protections in there.

MAGGIE ADAIR: Yes, absolutely.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Okay, great. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any other questions from committee members?

Seeing none, thank you.

MAGGIE ADAIR: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Sharon Pope and Evelyn Barnum, Randi Mezzy and Erin Jones.

Attorney Pope.

SHARON POPE: Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and committee members.

My name is Sharon Pope, and I'm here on behalf of the Connecticut Bar Association, the Elder Law Section, in support of Senate Bill 370.

There are two components, Section 1 and Section 2, which have been spoken about today. Section 2 is the proceeds from loan or reverse mortgage. We all seem to be in agreement that's a good idea. Commissioner Starkowski agrees also.

The only change we recommend he mentioned briefly and that is, I believe, on line 13 where it mentions income and asks -- we recommended the language be "income and assets," because in a home equity loan or a

JULIA WILCOX: -- nonprofit provider task force, which we so greatly appreciate, and that's all in my written testimony as well --

SENATOR DOYLE: Okay.

JULIA WILCOX: -- but most of our solutions obviously would be looking at overarching changes to -- to the system and looking at other alternative ways of saving funding, but this one particular area we feel would be so very counterproductive in terms of supporting this network again when it has, you know, the demand for services when everything else is increasing.

SENATOR DOYLE: Okay, thank you.

Any other questions from the committee?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

JULIA WILCOX: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Tamara Kramer. After Tamara is Christine Ceccarelli, then Dawn Mays-Hardy, and then James McGrath -- McCreath, I'm sorry.

TAMARA KRAMER: Good afternoon or maybe good evening -- (inaudible) what time it is -- Senator Doyle and members of the Human Services Committee..

My name is Tamara Kramer, and I'm a Policy Fellow with Connecticut Voices for Children. I originally came today in support of Senate Bill 391, but I want to echo the concerns of both the commissioner and Maggie Adair of CAHS that the language might inadvertently harm some of the providers who use the Care 4 Kids system.

And it sounds like from previous testimony that everyone is kind of on board with doing a rewrite, and Voices would love to be a part of that conversation.

We also believe this bill presents an opportunity to ensure that Care 4 Kids can fulfill its statutory purpose of supporting working parents. We believe in order to take advantage of this opportunity that the following two revisions should be added to the bill.

For the first, we want to add "as long as demand exists, that the full amount appropriated to the Care 4 Kids program must be spent." And the second, that the Department of Social Services may restrict eligibility if and only if it appears that demand will exceed the program's appropriation, and in that case, DSS must provide 60 days' notice to the providers and the other users of the Care 4 Kids program.

So the first provision will ensure that the legislative intent with regard to the Care 4 Kids program is respected, and it has not been in the recent past, unfortunately. In fiscal year 2010, the Legislature appropriated almost \$104 million to the Care 4 Kids program, and that money was intended to allow parents to continue working and support the economy.

The amount was approximately equal to the amount spent on the program in fiscal year '09. The Department of Social Services chose to impose significant eligibility restrictions deliberately intended to limit spending to fiscal year '10. This was the minimum expenditure required under ARRA to receive the funding -- \$13 million funding.

So working parents earning under 50 percent of the state median income -- parents who have not received Temporary Family Assistance within the past five years -- were no longer eligible for the program. So in other words, those parents who have been struggling to get by without state assistance were the ones that were excluded from the program. In the past six months -- oh, sorry -- the six months in the program was closed. Monthly enrollment in the program dropped from almost 22,000 down to 16,000.

So we're concerned that the refusal of the Department of Children -- I'm sorry -- Social Services to expend the full amount appropriated to the Care 4 Kids program is a disregard of legislative intent, and the Legislature demonstrated that it values the program by including the money, and we hope that in the future that this revision that we proposed in our -- our written testimony can prevent that from occurring.

We also, to briefly (inaudible), we also hope that in the future when the department chooses to close the program, that they implement a 60-day notification period which allows providers and parents to plan.

When it was closed in May of 2009, there was a seven-hour notice, and so the -- the notice went out around 5:00 p.m. after close of business, and they -- the notice said that you have until 11:59 to complete your paperwork and get it to United Way. So just -- it created a little bit of a panic, and also, a lot of parents did not find out until the next morning what had occurred.

So I just want to thank you for this opportunity and ask if there's any questions.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Representative Abercrombie.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony, and thank you for your hard work on this issue. I agree with you, there is no reason why they can't give a 60-day notice just to give people the opportunity. I mean, it's no different than if you have a daycare that's closing for a vacation.

TAMARA KRAMER: Right.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: You know, you have to give -- a provider has to give the parents the opportunity to get other -- to make other arrangements. I mean, it just seems so common sense, so I -- I totally agree with you there. And do you -- and -- and I'm sorry, I wasn't listening to the whole testimony. I apologize.

TAMARA KRAMER: That's okay.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Do you think that the 30-day turnaround is workable?

TAMARA KRAMER: Yes, so it actually -- the legislation, I believe, was intended to mirror current DSS regulation which says if there's a completed application, the department tells itself that should take 30 days to get that, and I think that we're just concerned that, as Maggie Adair has expressed as well to the commissioner, that just the way that the wording is could be misinterpreted.

And I think that the department is -- is on board, and they -- they intend to get a response in 30 days, and I think that they are terribly short-staffed, and with the closing, there was 3500 families on the wait list when the program was reopened in November of 2009.

So they are just, unfortunately, very short-staffed, and they have a huge demand. And as the economy, you know, gets worse, the demand increases, so I think that everyone is on board.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: But that's -- but that's the whole point, that these families are also the ones that are waiting for the response, and, you know, our providers are small businesses.

TAMARA KRAMER: Right.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: They have to pick up the slack, you know, and then if they do get a denial after three months, that's three months that they've been providing the service, so, you know, I think it -- I -- I agree with you --

TAMARA KRAMER: Yes.

REP. ABERCROMBIE: -- it's two-fold. We have to protect our families, and we also have to protect our small businesses.

TAMARA KRAMER: I -- I agree 100 percent. And, you know, providers -- regardless of where they get their funding from, that it's mostly from School Readiness --- they're all supplemented by the Care 4 Kids program, and they say all the time that their -- their books are always in flex because they -- they're never sure when the money is coming in or where -- you know, it's going to be reduced or when it's

going to go away, and so, I mean, the department has been really responsive.

Actually, my supervisor who normally works on this issue is at a Care 4 Kids advisory meeting that Peter Palomino from the department holds once every quarter, and so they do meet with the -- the providers, and I think there is a -- there is an atmosphere of, you know, understanding and working together, and I -- I'm really encouraged to hear the commissioner would -- would also like to meet with the provider, so --

REP. ABERCROMBIE: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any other questions from committee members?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

TAMARA KRAMER: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Christine Ceccarelli, then Dawn Mays-Hardy, then James McCreath, and then Tina Varick.

CHRISTINE CECCARELLI: Good afternoon. I appreciate this opportunity to testify, and I appreciate you pronouncing -- anyway, I appreciate you pronouncing my name correctly. It doesn't happen that often.

I am here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 370, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID LONG-TERM CARE COVERAGE FOR MARRIED COUPLES.

It's a little bit of a personal perspective to this issue, since I was a family caregiver for

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Tiffany Murasso, then Ray Baldwin, then Brian Ellsworth and Dr. Booss. Is Tiffany here? There she is.

TIFFANY MURASSO: Good afternoon.

My name is Tiffany Murasso, and I'm the Director of Early Childhood Programs for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Catholic Charities provides early care and education services in nine licensed childcare centers and serves approximately 450 children each year. Our programs serve the neediest children in the state and provide critical support to working families.

I'm here today to advocate for Senate Bill 391, which ensures the Care 4 Kids Program processes applications and makes eligibility determinations within 30 days of receipt. Currently, programs and families wait up to three months for this verification. The families we serve cannot afford to pay the full cost of care while waiting to find out if they are eligible for Care 4 Kids.

Working families in our state deserve efficient processing of applications, because too many worry how they will pay their bills and their childcare provider also. Many are forced to consider quitting their jobs and collecting state assistance instead.

As a School Readiness funded program, we depend on Care 4 Kids funds to help cover our cost of care and keep our programs operating. We operate on an extremely tight budget, and waiting several months for receiving payments for services puts tremendous strain on our

programs. Even small changes in revenues often can determine a center's survival.

I would also like to thank Legislators for working to keep the Care 4 Kids Program open this fiscal year, as without Care 4 Kids funding, our program could not offer the quality services to our most fragile children. It's impossible to provide this level of quality without adequate funding. It's therefore imperative that Care 4 Kids remain open in federal year '11 for the state's neediest children and families.

In the context of the economic crisis in our state, it's understandable that tough decisions must be made. However, the Early Childhood system is already marginally funded and fragile, and research shows that investment in early childhood impacts how children succeed in school and develop into productive members of society. Further cuts in funding will have a devastating impact on Connecticut children and families and end up costing our state more in the long run.

I respectfully request the above information is considered during this budget process. Thanks for your time and consideration.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any questions of committee members?

Representative Walker.

REP. WALKER: Thank you, and I know this has been a long day, but were you here when Commissioner Starkowski was here?

TIFFANY MURASSO: I was not, no.

REP. WALKER: I'm done. I'm sorry, go ahead.

TIFFANY MURASSO: I was not, no.

REP. WALKER: Oh, you weren't, okay. Because when we -- Representative Abercrombie and I both have been looking at how long it takes somebody to get Care 4 Kids authorized, and it was told to us that they didn't think it took three months to do that.

And one of the things that we've heard over and over again from -- especially from organizations that -- I mean, childcare programs that are in your -- in your organization, they all said that it takes up to mostly around three months for you to get the (inaudible).

TIFFANY MURASSO: Yes, well, it's -- it's getting better, but it's -- it's very inconsistent, so you -- you just -- you just can't count on it.

REP. WALKER: Okay.

TIFFANY MURASSO: And it puts us at a really -- very challenging situation, because we -- we can't -- you know, we can tell the family we have to wait until you're approved, and -- but that family can't wait, so oftentimes we have a child start, hoping and not knowing for sure if that child will be eligible or not.

REP. WALKER: We -- we're -- we're working on it. Thank you.

TIFFANY MURASSO: Very good, thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any other questions?

Representative Johnston.

REP. JOHNSTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On the applications, in the timeframe to get them approved, does an applicant know at what point their application is completely submitted? Do they -- do they ever get notice from the department that they've fulfilled and provided all the pertinent information?

TIFFANY MURASSO: No.

REP. JOHNSTON: Or as a provider, do you know at any point in time in the process that everything you've submitted -- that you've submitted everything that you need to submit?

TIFFANY MURASSO: We -- we do not get notification as a provider, although we -- we can call our local -- our representative, and they can tell us what we need, and that's often what we do. We track our own applications to find out if they have everything, if they need anything else, which helps to speed us along. But they don't ever send a notice saying, "We've received everything; you'll get a notice within a certain period of time," no.

REP. JOHNSTON: So from a provider's standpoint, you really don't -- do you -- I'm guessing, based on that answer, that you don't have any sense of how long they take to process that application once all of the information is submitted and complete.

TIFFANY MURASSO: No, we really -- we don't, and like I said, it's -- I know that they've worked on it, and they've improved it. We were waiting up to, you know, four months at one point. But again, they're still very inconsistent, and it's -- it's impossible

to -- to plan your -- a business when you don't know when your income is coming in and -- or if it will be coming in.

REP. JOHNSTON: Thank you. It seems -- it seems if we had some sense and -- and I don't want to even suggest it, because then it creates another -- another process, but it seems if we had -- if applicants and providers knew at which point DSS had a complete application with all information, then it might give us a better sense, and it would give you guys a better sense of how long it's actually taking to fully process that --

TIFFANY MURASSO: Right.

REP. JOHNSTON: -- where it's understandable if some information hasn't been submitted, that the application doesn't go forward.

TIFFANY MURASSO: Sure, I agree.

REP. JOHNSTON: Thank you.

TIFFANY MURASSO: Sure.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any other questions from the committee members?

TIFFANY MURASSO: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: Seeing none, thank you.

The next speaker is Ray Baldwin, then Brian Ellsworth, Dr. Booss and Sharon Langer.

RAYMOND BALDWIN: Good afternoon.

QB282

best for all parties involved and assuring that the state maximizes every opportunity it has to run effectively and efficiently.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any questions from the committee members?

Hearing none, thank you.

The next speaker is Gisele Lopez, Gary Waterhouse, Randi Mezzy, Caroline Mitchell -- Mitchell. Is Gisele here? Is not here, so -- what about Gary Waterhouse? What about Randi Mezzy? What about Caroline Mitchell? Caroline is here.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Good evening, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the committee. My name is Caroline Mitchell. I am the Director of Racial Justice and Advocacy for the YWCA Hartford Region. The YWCA is a national -- is part -- Hartford is part of the national organization that is dedicated to eliminating racism and empowering women and promoting peace, justice and freedom and dignity for all.

I am here today on behalf of the YWCA to support the Care 4 Kids program and the substitution to Raised Bill 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM, with the purpose of requiring the Commissioner of Social Services to process all properly-completed applications under the Care 4 Kids programs within 30 days.

In Connecticut, early childhood development provides a basis for community and economic

development. Skilled and competent children become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable state economy. Care 4 Kids childcare services help state residents get and keep the jobs they need in order to provide for their families, to contribute to the state's tax base, to participate as consumers who can help the state's economy around -- turn the -- turn the state's economy around. If any program is truly win-win, then we are looking at it.

But delayed processing of Care 4 Kids applications hurts everyone: parents anxious to work, children who would benefit from quality childcare, employers who need quality workers and the state's economy.

Ending processing delays is one basic, commonsense step we can take to make this valuable program more efficient and more effective. Our state government has high standards of -- of performance and this measure before us would codify those standards in the vital area of timely job-saving childcare services.

Of course, expedited processing of applications is a meaningful step only if the actual Care 4 Kids slots to be filled by applicants and providers who are compensated at a level that allows them to offer the program without courting bankruptcy. It's worth noting that childcare reimbursement rates have not been increased for more than a decade.

At YWCA, we work hard to do more with less. We can do a little with next to nothing. In that light, I urge this committee to make sure that Care 4 Kids is adequately funded in the upcoming budget.

Thank you for your attention and time.
Appreciate it.

SENATOR DOYLE: Thank you.

Any questions from -- Representative Walker.

REP. WALKER: Thank you for sticking around for this short day. Very quickly, when you have somebody come to you to get a slot for Care 4 Kids, do you sit down with them to help them fill out their forms to get all the paperwork together before they submit it?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Yes, our childcare staff does do that.

REP. WALKER: So pretty much, you're -- you're sure that almost everything is there when you submit it in the first place, correct?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Correct.

REP. WALKER: And does that -- and does that take 30 days or so?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: I'm told by our childcare director, it's -- has taken much longer.

REP. WALKER: Oh, it has taken --

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Yes, anywhere from 45 to 90 days.

REP. WALKER: Okay. All right. And that's just to get the application in?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Right.

REP. WALKER: And then once you get your application in, how long does it take for Department of Social Services to contact you?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: It has been as long as 45 days according to (inaudible).

REP. WALKER: Oh, for them to contact you?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Not -- to contact us.

REP. WALKER: To contact you.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Oh, I'm sorry. I -- I don't know (inaudible).

REP. WALKER: The -- the -- what -- the question I asked before was how long does it take for you to get all the materials from the person who's making the application?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Right.

REP. WALKER: And that's 45 days too?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: I'm told by our director that -- of childcare -- that it takes about 45 days. It's much longer than 30 days.

REP. WALKER: Okay. All right.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Even after -- the first question is after all the -- the documentation is presented, it takes longer than 30 days --

REP. WALKER: Okay.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: -- to render a decision.

REP. WALKER: Well -- to render a decision from the Department of Social Services.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Right.

REP. WALKER: But it -- it -- but -- that -- well, that's what I -- that's what I -- I think the point that I'm trying to get --

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Okay.

REP. WALKER: -- is how -- once you've submitted all the materials to the Department of Social Services, it takes about -- up to 45 days for you to get an answer from them.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Right, 45, maybe 60 days.

REP. WALKER: Okay, and how long -- once -- do you allow the child -- you don't -- do you allow the child to enroll before you complete the application, or do you allow the -- do you have the child enrolled once the application is complete as far as you're concerned?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: We allow the child to enroll after they approve with the certificate.

REP. WALKER: Oh, okay.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Our agency -- association doesn't allow the child to start before --

REP. WALKER: You get the certificate from Department of Social Services.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Correct.

REP. WALKER: I see. Okay, thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR DOYLE: You just -- I just want a quick follow-up. I -- I think Representative Walker clarified that it can take anywhere from 45 days of the date the complete application

is made, but the day one when your client comes in and sits down with you, I think you're saying it could take 30 days from that point, from the initial meeting with your client until -- until the application is made complete? Could that -- that's because you're relying on the client to get you information or am I missing that?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Well, for -- on our end, the information that we need to submit is done on a timely manner and -- and in verifying with (inaudible) director, the time -- the additional or the lesser time that it takes beyond -- that would extend beyond 30 days is due to the fact that the verification of employment takes much longer and --

SENATOR DOYLE: And so the client's asking, it takes some more to get --

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Right, correct.

SENATOR DOYLE: -- so basically, you're waiting -- then do you -- once -- does the client give it to you, then you make one complete application usually to the DSS?

CAROLINE MITCHELL: No, that I -- I don't know the answer to.

SENATOR DOYLE: Okay, sorry, okay. All right.

Thank you.

Any other questions?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

CAROLINE MITCHELL: Thank you.

SENATOR DOYLE: The next speaker is Cheryl Martone.



33 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, CT 06510
Voice: 203-498-4240
Fax: 203-498-4242
www.ctkidslink.org

Testimony in Support of S.B. 391: An Act Concerning Child Care Subsidies for the Unemployed under the Care 4 Kids Program.

Tamara Kramer and Cyd Oppenheimer, JD
Human Services Committee
March 11, 2010

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

We submit this written testimony on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, an independent, research-based nonprofit organization dedicated to speaking up for children and youth in the policymaking process that has such a great impact on their lives.

I. Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 391, and suggests including additional language which will ensure that legislative intent with regard to this program is respected and that parents and providers receive adequate notice about eligibility changes.

While Connecticut Voices for Children is in support of this legislation, the language requiring processing applications within 30 days simply codifies what is currently in DSS regulations. We believe, however, that this bill presents an opportunity to ensure that Care4Kids can fulfill its statutory purpose of supporting working parents. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, the following two provisions must be added to the bill:

- 1) As long as demand exists under current eligibility requirements, the full amount appropriated to the Care4Kids program must be spent on this program in the fiscal year.
- 2) The Department of Social Services may restrict eligibility if and only if it appears that demand will exceed the program's appropriation for the fiscal year, and in this instance, DSS must provide 60 days notice before the changes go into effect.

The first provision will ensure that legislative intent with regard to the Care4Kids program is respected, as it has not been in the past. In FY 2010, the legislature appropriated \$103.87 million for the Care4Kids program, money intended to allow parents to keep working and contributing to our economy. This amount was approximately equal to the amount spent on the program in FY 09. But the Department of Social Services, without legislative consultation or approval, chose to impose significant eligibility restrictions deliberately intended to limit FY 10 spending to \$93 million (the minimum expenditure required under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act maintenance-of-effort requirement). Working parents earning under 50% of the state median income – parents who were *not* currently receiving Temporary Family Assistance and had not received Temporary Family Assistance within the past five years – were no longer eligible to

apply to the program. In other words, those parents who had been struggling to get by without state help were the ones excluded from the program. In six months, monthly enrollment in the program dropped from 22,175 to 16,953, a decrease of over 5,000 children.

We are concerned that the refusal of the Department of Social Services to expend the full amount appropriated to the Care 4 Kids program is a disregard of legislative intent. At any level of government, a separation of powers is necessary to provide a check on those who hold positions of authority. The legislature demonstrated that it values the importance of Care4Kids by including money to support the program in their budget. It is essential for good governance that the legislature is able to ensure that its instructions not be ignored by another branch.

The second provision, mandating 60-days notice of eligibility restrictions in the event of a possible program deficit, recognizes the needs of parents and child care providers and ensures that eligibility changes will be grounded in data and not based on a wait-and-see model.

The Department of Social Services currently has the ability to restrict eligibility at will and without any notice whatsoever. It exercised this power in May 2009, closing the program to a significant number of new applicants with only 7 hours notice. Thus, a parent who had started working that week, expecting to submit her Care4Kids application as soon as she received the first two pay stubs required by the program, was suddenly ineligible. Child care providers who had planned their budgets assuming a relatively stable number of Care4Kids participants found themselves in economic turmoil. Consequences were devastating.

Mandating 60-days notice would protect parents and providers but, equally important, it would force the Department of Social Services's actions to be data-driven. The eligibility restrictions imposed in May 2009 were seemingly not grounded in any projections based on previous years' data, despite the existence of such data. As a result, the drop in Care4Kids enrollment as a result of the May 2009 restrictions was much higher than expected, and the concomitant reduction in expenditures much greater than anticipated. Although the Department of Social Services re-opened Care4Kids in November 2009, as things currently stand, it is going to spend significantly less than \$93 million – the floor required by ARRA – by the end of the fiscal year, possibly as much as \$9 million less.

This means that the \$13 million in ARRA funds that Connecticut received via the Child Care Development Block Grant are at risk – unless the Department of Social Services takes some immediate action to ensure that \$93 million is spent on Care4Kids, we might have to return the \$13 million in ARRA funds.

Operating on a wait-and-see basis is not good government. If the Department of Social Services is allowed to impose eligibility restrictions if and only if it appears the program will go into deficit, and if 60-days notice must accompany those restrictions, the Department will be required to continually estimate and revisit projected spending for the fiscal year so that it will be aware at all times of estimated expenditures and be able to take necessary action. A more data-driven approach will also ensure that eligibility restrictions have the desired effect of driving expenditures down to, but not below, the appropriated amount for the program. The situation we are facing this year, where ARRA funds are at risk because the Department of Social Services failed to adequately project the likely results of its May restrictions, will thus not happen again.

In conclusion, we ask you to support SB 391, amended to include our recommendations that promote data-driven decision making and the implementation of legislative intent, in order to ensure that Care4Kids is structured to best serve the family and children that rely on this critical program.



hartford region

Testimony Submitted to the Human Services Committee

S.B. No. 391: AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED
UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAMS

Public Hearing Date: March 11, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Doyle and Representative Walker and members of the committee. My name is Caroline Mitchell. I am Director of Racial Justice and Advocacy for the YWCA Hartford Region. YWCA is a national organization dedicated to eliminating racism and empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

I am here today on behalf of the YWCA to support the Care 4 Kids program and the substitution to "Raised Bill 391: An Act Concerning Child Care Subsidies for the Unemployed Under the Care 4 Kids Program" with the purpose of requiring the Commissioner of Social Services to process all properly completed applications under the Care 4 Kids program within thirty days.

In Connecticut, early childhood development provides a basis for community and economic development. Skilled and competent children become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable state economy. Care 4 Kids childcare services help state residents get and keep the jobs they need in order to provide for their families; to contribute to the state's tax base; and to participate as consumers who can help turn the state's economy around. If any program is truly win-win-win, then we are looking at right here.

But delayed processing of Care 4 Kids applications hurts everyone: Parents anxious to work; children who would benefit from quality childcare; employers who need quality workers; and the state's economy.

Ending processing delays is one basic, common sense step we can take to make this valuable program more efficient and more effective. Our state government has high standards of performance – and this measure before us would codify those standards in the vital area of timely, job-saving childcare services.

Of course, expedited processing of applications is a meaningful step only if there are actual Care 4 Kids slots to be filled by applicants – and providers who are compensated at a level that allows them to offer the program without courting bankruptcy. It's worth noting that childcare reimbursement rates have not been increased for more than a decade. At YWCA, we work hard to do more with less. But we can do little with next-to-nothing. In that light, I urge this committee to make sure that Care 4 Kids is adequately funded in the upcoming budget.

Thank you for your attention and time.



Senator Paul R. Doyle, Co-Chair
Representative Toni E. Walker, Co-Chair
Members of the Human Services Committee

March 11, 2010

**Testimony Regarding Senate Bill No. 391, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD CARE
SUBSIDIES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED UNDER THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM**

Good Afternoon, My name is Tiffany Murasso, I am the Director of Early Childhood Programs for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Catholic Charities provides Early Care and Education services in 9 licensed centers serving approximately 450 children each year. Our programs serve the neediest children in the state, and provide critical support for working families.

I am here today to advocate for bill 391 which ensures the Care 4 Kids Program processes applications and makes eligibility determinations within 30 days of receipt. Currently programs and families wait up to three months for this verification. The families we serve can not afford to pay the full cost of childcare while waiting to find out if they are eligible for Care 4 Kids. Working families in our state deserve efficient processing of applications. Too many worry how they will pay their child care provider and many are forced to consider quitting their jobs and collecting state assistance instead.

As a School Readiness funded program we depend on Care 4 Kids funds to help cover our cost of care and keep our programs operating. We operate on an extremely tight budget and waiting several months before receiving payment for services provided puts tremendous strain on our programs. Often times, small changes in revenues can determine a center's survival.

I would like to thank legislators for working to keep the Care 4 Kids program open this fiscal year as without Care 4 Kids funding our program could not offer the quality services our most fragile children need to be successful. It is impossible to provide this level of quality without adequate funding. It is therefore imperative that the Care 4 Kids program remain open in FY11 for the states neediest children and families.

In the context of the economic crisis in our state it is understandable that tough decisions must be made, however the Early Childhood system is already marginally funded and fragile. Research shows that investment in early childhood impacts how children succeed in school and develop into productive members of society. Further cuts in funding will have a devastating impact on Connecticut children and families and cost our state more in the long run.

Thank you for your time and support.

CAHS

The Connecticut Association for Human Services
 110 Bartholomew Avenue - Suite 4030
 Hartford, Connecticut 06106
 www.cahs.org

Michael Rohde, President
 James P. Horan, Executive Director
 860.951.2212 x 235
 860.951.6511 (fax)

Testimony before the Human Services Committee
Re: S.B. 391 – An Act Concerning Child Care Subsidies for the Unemployed
Under the Care 4 Kids Program
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Deputy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
March 11, 2010

Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and members of the Human Services Committee. I am Maggie Adair, Deputy Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a 100-year-old statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future. I also serve as a Steering Committee member of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance.

I am testifying on S.B. 391, An Act Concerning Child Care Subsidy for the Unemployed under Care 4 Kids Program. This bill reiterates components of current Care 4 Kids regulations. However, although policies exist to guide effective implementation of the program, on-the-ground practices of the child care subsidy program do not necessarily meet the expectations and intent of the regulations.

This new bill language captures the reasonable timeline *already* established in the Care 4 Kids regulations for an application to be processed in 30 days. Unfortunately, staffing and backlog issues have resulted in some applications not being touched and/or responded to within 30 days, which in turn results in a processing period that often exceeds 60 days. **It must be made clear that the 30-day determination outlined in this bill does not then give the agency the license to deny applicants if the application is not completed within the 30-day time period.** The due process of missing items request being sent to applicants must be adhered to as outlined in the regulations. It is imperative that the Department of Social Services (DSS) recognize that the bill calls for a determination of a "properly completed application" within 30 days.

CAHS recommends two additions to this bill that would make a significant improvement in the Care 4 Kids program:

- **As long as there is demand under current eligibility requirements, the full amount appropriated for this line item should be expended.**
- **The Department of Social Services may restrict eligibility if and only it appears that demand will exceed the program's appropriation for the fiscal year, and in this instance, DSS must provide 60 days notice before the changes go into effect.**

As long as there is demand under current eligibility requirements, the full amount appropriated for this line item should be expended. The Legislature budgeted \$103.87 million for FY10 to Care 4 Kids based on the level of demand and spending in FY09. However, DSS plans to only spend \$93 million, which is the maintenance of effort required to keep the \$13 million in the

Child Development Block Grant (CCDBG) ARRA funds. That means \$10 million appropriated by the Legislature will not be used to help parents gain access to child care and enable them to work.

The Care 4 Kids program was abruptly closed in May of 2009 to non-TFA parents. The program also imposed new restrictions in eligibility that resulted in some families being bumped from the program when they experienced a small increase in income. As a result, within six months enrollment in the program plummeted from 22,175 to 16,953, which prompted DSS to reopen the program in November of 2009 in hopes of reaching the maintenance of effort spending. As a result of the program closure, 5,000 fewer children were served. DSS is struggling to reach \$93 million – not necessarily because of lack of demand – but because the program was closed for six months, because parents were bumped off the program under new eligibility criteria, and because there is a significant backlog in processing applications to enroll and re-enroll parents.

The Legislature appropriated \$103.87 based on demand and understanding the importance of providing quality child care that enables low-income parents to work. Legislative intent should be respected.

The Department of Social Services may restrict eligibility if and only it appears that demand will exceed the program's appropriation for the fiscal year, and in this instance, DSS must provide 60 days notice before the changes go into effect. When the program was abruptly closed in May 2009, providers and parents were given less than 24-hour notice. This is not reasonable. Especially during these financially taxing times when child care providers are struggling to keep their programs open, it is a reasonable ask for DSS to give providers ample notice that they can plan accordingly for the prospective loss of income. It is also reasonable to give parents time to adjust to a program closure or change in eligibility criteria.

The closing and reopening of the Care 4 Kids program has been haphazard and lacks a data-driven approach. As a result of the six-month closure, the reduction in spending was apparently higher than expected. DSS originally planned to close the program in February 2010, but now plans to keep the program open to June 2010 – a good thing for parents and providers! But the lack of planning and data is concerning. DSS anticipated that it will spend less than \$93 million by the end of June, possibly as much as \$9 million less. If the state cannot spend the \$93, it risks losing the \$13 million in ARRA funds, \$11 million of which was expended in FY10.

I would like to make two more points about the Care 4 Kids enrollment process.

First, this is not to slight the hard work of the United Way of Connecticut, which is the DSS-funded Care 4 Kids contractor. There is currently inadequate staffing to handle the backlog of applications caused by the program closure.

Second, like other DSS programs, enrollment is done by paper. CAHS supports a single-point-of-entry procedure for state-funded programs and services and a combined, on-line application and enrollment processes for programs that serve children and families. On-line applications would be quicker, better serve children and families, reduce wasted paperwork, and make much better use of staff handling applications. We hope that the DSS modernization project moves quickly along.

CAHS supports the overall intent of S.B. 391, spotlighting the need for policies and regulations to be enforced as practice. We are an organization that has been working for 100 years to combat poverty and create opportunities for children and families. The recommendations outlined are in full alignment with that mission, and we trust that the legislature will recognize that the recommendations outlined in this testimony are in alignment with the mission of the state.