

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6867

Title: AN ACT CREATING THE UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL ENDOWMENT.

Vote Date: 3/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/19/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Request of the Governor Pursuant to Joint Rule 9.

REASONS FOR BILL:

HB-6867 seeks to remedy a problem seen by residents of our state regarding early childhood education. With economic stresses currently faced by many residents, it is becoming more and more difficult for families to enroll their children at a high-quality preschool, which disadvantages them cognitively and educationally, as well as financially for the family.

This bill seeks to introduce a universal preschool program in this state maintaining preschool be free for those families making \$100,000 a year or less, \$20 a day for those families making \$150,000 or less a year, and using state funds to expand or create 22,000 preschool programs in this state before 2032, while bolstering the ability of providing top-quality preschool education to our young people in the existing 19,000 subsidized preschool programs at or before 2028 by lowering their operating costs.

This increase in funding would allow preschool programs to grow over time, employ more teachers, enroll more students, and overall cost less for both school and student families over time. In effect, this bill will benefit our state's young people by granting all with a top-of-the-line pre-education, preparing them for school, and making them able to succeed better in their educational career than they could without such pre-education.

This bill also clarifies classifications of what counts as pre-education and who is qualified to do so in the state. Such clarifications include "Well Qualified Staff" being required for this program, the non-transferability of "Youth Camp" licenses, and, among other clarifications, creates more consistency around local governance and oversight into the program, in effect making pre-education easier to be understood by the government as well as by families with children in need of these subsidized/affordable programs.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner, Beth Bye](#): Supports this bill because the clarifications on subjects that affect preschool programs including mandating that "Well Qualified Staff" being present in these subsidized programs, clarifying the non-transitional nature of "Youth Camp" and similar licensure, and the allowance for government oversight on pre-education will benefit not only Connecticut's already subsidized Early Start programs, but all other sites where such education is held in our state, thus benefiting our youth tremendously.

[Office of Early Childhood, Acting Commissioner, Elena Trueworthy](#): Supports this bill stating that supporting youth with an expansion of the SDE's 10% budget on the matter to a \$30 million endowment, pursuant to collaboration between the Office of the Treasurer and the OEC Commissioner. Such an expanse would aid the state exponentially by investing in our young people's education and create a better environment for business and economic growth due to the expansion of preschool programs and increase in employed educators.

[Connecticut State Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker](#): Supports this bill for its expanded access to education for our state's young residents and backing it up with over \$300 million surplus funds from FY2025 and a possible \$30 million additional bump in funding, pursuant to OEC and CT Treasurer decisions.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[CSEA SEIU Local 2001, Childcare Provider, Maria Amado](#): Supports this bill because it will greatly help families in paying for preschool but insists that family preschool providers be included in this bill to truly benefit all Connecticut residents in this bill.

[Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty Consortium, Co-Chair, Paige Barry](#): Supports this bill because it increases access to quality care and addresses the needs professed by preschool educators around the state. This bill would also improve children's education through age 8, would improve both public and community-based care for all, regardless of earnings, and improve social and physical health of young people in these programs through the increase of social-emotional learning education provided by these preschool educators and facilities.

[Connecticut Voices for Children, Emily Byrne](#): Supports this bill in it's aims to create a universal preschool program but expresses need for change in the bill. They profess that there is no need for a new funding source as there are already funds in Early Childhood Care and trusts have been enacted last year to cover said costs. Also, they propose a transfer cap at one year for all funds included in endowments to prevent overspending. And lastly, they propose that funding be focused not just on Pre-kindergarten education, but on all early childhood educational needs, of which there is much economic want of such robust state support.

[Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs, Vice President, John Cattelan](#): Supports this bill because it would help to open the currently 40,000 unfilled childcare slots in the state plus fill the 4,000

early childcare educator gap. Though they are concerned that this bill does not go far enough to fully support the critical Infant to Toddler need for care in the state.

[Torrington Child Care Center, Executive Director, Mary Cecchinato](#): Supports this bill because it would allow these centers to create a more reasonable budget that will be inclusive to families of lower incomes. With OEC funding as well, care centers will be able to receive support an increase in wage for their accredited early childhood educators.

[CSEA SEIU Local 2001, Childcare Provider, Angelica Cervantes](#): Supports this bill because it provides financial aid for families who are financially unable to pay for early childhood care. In this petitioner claims that they have seen parents lose jobs because they cannot cope with payment for their child(ren)s early childhood care, and therefore have to commit more time to their care than they can work. This bill would alleviate that problem by making preschool affordable to all people and therefore parents can keep their jobs while providing for their families without the need to worry about such financial hardships.

[Bridgeport Prospers, Parents Connecting Parents, Talyn Cook](#): Supports this bill because it provides affordable high-quality early education resources to residents who need them in this state, benefiting not only them, but their children who will prosper much more given this quality preschool education compared to not having it at all or at gross financial expense to their parents.

[Kindergarten Educator, Lisa Cordova](#): Supports this bill because it would allow more students to attend preschool education that will better prepare them for life ahead, increasing graduation rates, educational achievement, and benefiting our state economically.

[Grandmother, Debra Dagon](#): Supports this bill given the need of these subsidies it proposes especially by disabled children and their families.

[Connecticut Education Association, President, Kate Dias](#): Supports this bill because it helps ensure the educational foundation children receive through good preschool educations in entering kindergarten at age five.

[CSEA SEIU Local 2001, Childcare Provider, Queen Freeloove](#): Supports this bill because it provides a large sum of money for childhood development and they hope that this endowment can be used to benefit all students, no matter their family's income.

[Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Executive Director, Merrill Gay](#): Supports this bill because it proposes legislation that supports students and educators in preschool programs throughout the state and provides real tactics in which to fully fund them upon adoption. With OEC and local community engagement, growth in number of these programs will be created and the support of youth will be increased as a result.

[YWCA New Britain CT, CEO, Tracey Hennessey](#): Supports this bill because it creates more equality in the preschool system, making it easier and less burdensome for families to pay for their children to enter such programs. It also benefits educators in these programs by providing a large endowment for their further payment at competitive rates, encouraging more to enter the field and as a result, provide greater quality care for an influx of more students.

[ConnCAN, Executive Director, Steven Hernandez](#): Supports this bill because it supports both children from ages 0-5 and educators who help them develop socio-emotionally and lets their families maintain economic stability through subsidized enrollment.

[Governor, Ned Lamont](#): Supports this bill because it is a major investment in the future of our state's children and families, allowing them to choose how best to educate their children without the need to worry about financial hardship. Also, this bill creates jobs and improves the earnings of local businesses.

[Taneta McCaw](#): Supports this bill because it will increase funding for early childhood education and support families and students of all incomes throughout the state.

[The Connecticut Project Action Fund \(TCPAF\), VP of External Affairs, Melvin Medina](#): Supports this bill because it's funding is stable for long-term investment with a fiscal source that can be edited to meet fiscal standards and rules as time goes on. They posit that the endowment program benefits educators and programs at a good level, while remaining financially responsible. And having streamlined governance practices and disbursement is in the public's interest, making the system easier to interface with and understand.

[Connecticut Office of Early Childhood \(OEC\), Parent Cabinet Member, Mallory Paige](#): Supports this bill because it would support families in providing for a quality education for their children in an equitable and affordable manner.

[Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz](#): Supports this bill because it follows on a year on year trend set by the Governor and the state legislature in providing funding for early childhood education. This bill specifically would bring great benefits to young people across our state by providing equitable and affordable preschool education for all, no matter family income or location.

[Sleeping Giant Day Care Inc., Director, Edie Reichard](#): Supports this bill because it helps families making less than \$100,000 a year and supports programs by subsidizing them and making possible the creation of budgets that are more affordable for these individuals who need such affordable preschool programs.

[Trinity College Child Center, Executive Director, Kyla Siegmann](#): Supports this bill because it helps families achieve financial stability through making care from birth more affordable. This also helps educators by subsidizing their wages and making business more competitive, thus creating more programs, and educating/caring for more children, creating a virtuous circle benefiting the economy.

[All Our Kin, Policy Specialist, Jade Thomas](#): Supports this bill because it makes families financially more independent and stable while keeping their children in early education. With constant early childhood care, the state will build up to \$1 billion in increased revenue from said subsidized services and improve the stability of those utilizing the services, student, family, educator, and state.

[Middletown Public Schools, Superintendent, Alberto Vázquez Matos](#): Supports this bill because it is an investment in the future of our state's young people and supports those who educate them through endowments which boost their wages and keep them employed. It also

reduces barriers to said education while strengthening and expanding subsidized preschool programs. And it also supports a mixed public and private delivery methodology by making quality subsidized education an option for those who need it and not eliminating private sources.

[American Heart Association, Government Relations Director, Jim Williams](#): Supports this bill because it helps improve health and overall success of children when in a birth to age five program. It also has a 13% return on investment for such programs granted to at-risk families, which is an economic bonus to the state as well as a stabilizing factor for families in need of such programs. In effect, these programs will bolster future economic and academic success growth in the state through investing in its students and their families.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Michelle Gagliardi, Owner - Child Care Provider, Michelle Gagliardi](#): Opposes this bill because it poses a financial threat to the stability of the state. They support the aims of the bill but insist upon a financial visibility amendment being added to ensure public trust and fair spending of state dollars within this goal.

Reported by: Tom Atwood

Date: 4/17/2025