1. Name:

Courtney Parkerson

2. Email:

3. Town *

New Haven

4. I am a: *

Please select at most 2 options.

- [ ] Parent
- [ ] Childcare Provider
- [ ] Early Childhood Educator
- [ ] Community Organization
- [ ] Employer
- [x] Advocate
- [ ] Other

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: *

Full Testimony: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WUqiBsI__RQYbCta6uJSvm8bTFt0DGnv/view?usp=sharing

Abridged version:
I am Courtney Parkerson, Director of Early Childhood Education at The Connecticut Project. I want to begin by thanking the state legislature, Governor Lamont, the Office of Early Childhood, and members of this Advisory Board for creating the Early Childhood Education Endowment. We are grateful for your commitment to making affordable access to child care a reality.

Connecticut has the opportunity to deliver what decades of research have shown: high-quality early education is one of the best investments a state can make. It yields lifelong benefits for children, financial stability for families, and measurable gains for the economy. The Endowment presents the possibility to reorient Connecticut's early childhood education system from one built on temporary, discrete, and fragmented funding streams to one anchored by a permanent, state-owned and operated fund. To achieve this transformation, we as a state need be clear about the continued commitment necessary to fund it. The Governor, Office of Early Childhood, and the Treasurer need to publicly set a clear target for the Endowment's ultimate size, based on the funding needed for the Endowment's beneficiaries: working class families. With steady deposits of at least $300M annually, the Endowment can grow, generating annual disbursements that create stability for families and child care providers alike.

To deliver on the promise of universal, affordable child care, it's essential that the state not only grows the Endowment's funding but also spends it wisely, as the decisions this Advisory Board makes will impact children and families for decades to come. It is essential that the Office of Early Childhood, with input from this Advisory Board, centers families in its Endowment decisions, especially the working class families that stand to benefit most from increased access to universal, affordable child care.

In our written testimony, we offer six core values and associated policy recommendations to govern the Endowment's implementation. Each of these would ensure that affordable, high quality child care is available where and when working class families need and want it. I will briefly outline them now and welcome the opportunity to engage with the board further to discuss.

One: working class families earning below $150,000 should be prioritized first.

This threshold encompasses the majority of families who are at or below the ALICE survival threshold and stand to benefit the most.

Two: Child care should be available during the hours families need and want it.

Which means the hours that parents work. For many families, this is a minimum of eight hours per day, year-round. And in some cases, for families that work second and third shifts.

Three: Child care should be available where families need and want it.

This requires specific investments to build infrastructure in child care deserts and a better understanding of parent demand, which is something the new enrollment and navigation portal could make possible.

Four: Families should have access to a user-friendly system that empowers them to find the affordable child care options they want and need.

This includes aligning eligibility criteria and the process by which families research and apply to subsidized child care programs.

Five: Improve quality by increasing compensation and supporting educators, so children enter kindergarten ready to learn, grow, and succeed.

This will reduce educator turnover and ensure that Connecticut has the educators it needs to expand its child care system.

And finally: The system should be accountable to working class parents with young children.

This means defining indicators of success and measuring progress clearly.