

1. Name:

Sarah Russell

2. Email:

3. Town \*

Colchester

4. I am a: \*

Please select at most 2

☒ Parent

☐ Childcare Provider

☐ Early Childhood Educator

☐ Community Organization

☐ Employer

☐ Advocate

☐ Other

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: \*

Senator Maher, Representative Farrar, Commissioner Trueworthy, and members of the Early Childhood Endowment Advisory Board, thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Sarah Russell; I live in Colchester, Connecticut though I was born and raised in Bridgeport. Please let it be known that this testimony is submitted as both a parent & caregiver to neurodivergent children, and someone who is deeply committed to ensuring that early childhood programs in our state remain accessible, equitable, and fully funded.

I have direct experience with how critical these programs are. In 2015, when my oldest child was young, a Care4Kids subsidized slot allowed me to begin my career as a social worker. Without that financial assistance, my salary would not have been enough to cover childcare. That support provided him with consistent care, which, looking back, helped him build essential skills as he now moves through adolescence with an ADHD diagnosis.

In stark contrast, when my youngest child was born in 2022, the lack of part-time, flexible, or affordable care options forced me to delay returning to work. We had no choice but to absorb the full burden of care at home until he became eligible for preschool special education services.

This instability means I cannot work a traditional full-time job and instead rely on limited self-employment income. For my family, living under \$100,000 per year, free or affordable childcare would dramatically change our current stability and our future prospects.

My family's story is not unique; other families in town raising twins are unable to return to work entirely because childcare costs are simply too high. For many families in Connecticut, childcare is not just an expense; it is a barrier to employment and economic mobility or stability.

I respectfully urge the Advisory Board to strengthen and expand the Early Childhood Endowment and the Early Start program with sustainable long-term funding, increased infant/toddler slots, and a healthy, well-supported early childhood workforce.

The absence of affordable, reliable childcare is a statewide economic issue. Connecticut cannot afford to lose an entire generation of college-educated women from the workforce for years at a time. When parents, especially mothers, step out of the workforce, the state loses tax revenue, employers lose skilled workers, and entire industries lose experienced talent.

Investing deeply in early childhood care is one of the most efficient economic strategies available. When parents have dependable childcare, they return to work, maintain career trajectories, earn higher lifetime wages, and contribute more robustly to Connecticut's economy. Strengthening the Endowment is not only the right thing to do for families; it is fiscally responsible and essential for long-term economic growth.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to supporting Connecticut families. I would be happy to speak again any time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Russell