

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Report: Funding for Early Care and Education Has Declined Over Time, Despite High Cost of Child Care**

### ***CT Group Urges Lawmakers to Avoid Child Care Cuts for Working Families During Recession***

Child care remains an unaffordable expense for many working families, but Connecticut's overall investment in early care and education programs has declined over this decade, according to the state's first comprehensive report on the state of early care and education. The state has made some progress in expanding funding for early care programs since 2004, but potential state budget cuts could quickly undo this progress.

The report, issued by Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based policy think tank, found that in 2008, the average cost of child care was \$9,100 per child, often the most expensive necessity in the budget of working families. Despite the high costs of child care, the state spent 12% *less* in inflation-adjusted dollars on early care and education programs in 2008 than it did in 2002.

*The Connecticut Early Care & Education Progress Report, 2009* is released as the Governor and the state legislature are considering cuts to a wide variety of public programs in response to the state's revenue shortfall. Last week, Governor Rell made dramatic and sudden cutbacks in new enrollment in Care4Kids, the largest state program that helps families with the cost of child care.

"At a time when we want to help parents return to work and support our economic recovery, we need to make sure they have a safe and healthy place for their children to learn and develop," said Cyd Oppenheimer, Senior Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children and author of the report. "Cuts to quality child care undermine our children's development and our economic recovery."

Among the report's other findings:

- **Connecticut's progress has been uneven between age groups.** Three- and four-year-olds have benefited from an expansion of the pre-kindergarten School Readiness program; however, infants and toddlers have not seen a similar improvement in the availability, cost, or quality of early care, despite a wealth of scientific data about the importance of the first thousand days of life.

- **Connecticut’s planning and coordination of its early childhood education system is inadequate.** The state of Connecticut lacks a public structure with the authority or responsibility to coordinate efforts to ensure that children and parents have access to high-quality and affordable child care and early education. This lack of coordinated planning has produced an array of programs and funding sources from multiple agencies that results in confusion for both providers and parents. As a result, parents apply to a variety of sources for support and providers use a patchwork of funding sources. Also, a lack of key data means that it is not possible to accurately calculate the number of children being served by early care programs, how that number has changed over time, or whether Connecticut children with preschool experience later perform better in school. The state does not collect the data that would allow this kind of evaluation.
- **Children from affluent communities continue to outperform children from poor communities.** For example, in the 2007-2008 school year, one-third or fewer fourth graders in the poorest school districts met the state goals in math, reading and writing, compared to more than 80% of fourth graders in wealthy towns. Stark differences in school success among grade school students point to the need to ensure that all children are prepared to succeed in school.

“Unlike a road repair, our children’s education and development cannot be temporarily put on hold while we work out our state revenue problems,” said Jamey Bell, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children. “The education and quality child care we provide now will have long-term consequences for our children’s school performance and our economic health.”

To help reverse impacts of the overall reduction in spending, Connecticut Voices for Children recommends that state policymakers should:

- In the short run, maintain funding levels for early care and reject budget cuts that will erase any progress made in the last decade and make it more difficult for families to work during the economic recovery. In the long run, increase the per-child reimbursement rate for all state financed early childhood care and education spaces so that all children receive a high quality and fully funded space, regardless of the program they happen to be funded through.
- Create a system of data collection to track children across programs and over time so that policymakers can evaluate progress and educational outcomes.
- Reform the existing “silo” approach to funding child care and build a more integrated and better planned early care and education system.

Connecticut Voices for Children is a statewide, research and policy organization that works at the state and federal levels to advance strategic public investment and wise public policies to benefit our state’s children, youth and families. For more information on Connecticut Voices, or to read the report, see [www.ctkidslink.org](http://www.ctkidslink.org).

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