



THE CT PROJECT
ACTION FUND

Start with Equity

**A COALITION OF PARENTS AND PROVIDERS INVESTED
IN CHILDREN'S FUTURES**



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About us

We are a non-partisan 501(c)4 non-profit organization that mobilizes people and partners to advocate for solutions that better the lives of Connecticut's vulnerable and financially distressed families.

We leverage our resources to achieve systems change by: aligning, investing, and advocating. We build connections and coalitions across sectors and issues towards collective action.



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Partners & Supporters





Today we will review

- Changes to Kindergarten Start Age
 - Challenges
 - Solutions
- Brief overview of your role in legislative process
 - Contacting your representative
 - Testifying in Public Hearings
 - Why It all matters





Background on K-Eligibility

- Before, children in Connecticut were able to start kindergarten as long as they turned 5 years old by Dec. 31. This year, the legislature passed a law that requires all children entering kindergarten in 2024 to be 5 years old by September 1.
- Without proper implementation this will hurt households with limited resources and options.



How did this happen?

- In 2023 the legislature voted to passed a law changing the start age beginning in 2024.
- They did this with little to no parental input.
- They did not consider how this impacts families struggling to afford or find childcare.



Reasons given for this change

- Connecticut was one of few states that allowed 4 ½ year olds to enter kindergarten
- The change was made to bring Connecticut in line with most states

What are the barriers to this change?

- Families who have access to childcare and preschool will have to pay for an additional year.
- Families who do not have access to preschool or childcare will spend more time on wait list
- There are not enough subsidized preschool or childcare slots that are full day programs. This change widens the shortage



What needs to change?

- Legislators need to hear from you to support additional funding for families with children who need access to preschool.
- CT Families need \$50 Million in subsidies for families making less than \$85k to access preschool and childcare.



Why are we involved?

- We agree, it makes sense to bring CT in alignment and a successful transition does not leave families frozen out of early learning experiences. A change of this scale requires thoughtful implementation.
- When this passed, the impact on working families and an under-resourced Early Care and Education System was not considered.
- With adequate time and resources children can enter kindergarten when they are ready, without disproportionately impacting low-income families, early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers and school administrators.



The Problem: Implementation lacks Equity

To benefit from starting kindergarten at age 5, low-income families need support to pay for an unexpected extra year of childcare or pre-school.

Notable issues

- Families will spend an average of \$12,731 more per year per child.
- 4,500 subsidized seats are required.
- Most parents spend X on wait list
- Kindergarten enrollment for the 2024/25 school year & waiver request process are confusing for families
- Pre-K enrollment changes: if your child turns 3 after September 1st they cannot enter pre-k 3



Continued....

This change creates a bottleneck in the under-resourced early education and care system by:

- Exacerbating the pre-existing shortage of seats
- Putting stress on early childcare educators
- Leaving parents and children trapped without access to programs.

Without proper funding and implementation, the change in kindergarten eligibility means thousands of children whose families cannot afford preschool will have to go for another year without a structured early learning environment



Start with Equity Campaign Goals

All children should have the chance to enter kindergarten ready to learn, grow, and succeed.

- **Phasing in the change** so parents and early childhood educators have time to plan.
- **Increasing childcare subsidies by \$50 million** to help the thousands of families who will need an extra year of childcare that they didn't expect.



Why \$50 Million is needed?

The legislature needs to account for the impact of the change on family budgets

This estimate is Based on the amount per child subsidies for school readiness programs and Care4Kids.

$\$10,500 \times 4,500 = \$47.25\text{M} + \text{Care4Kids overlap } (\$2.75)$



Resources to stay informed and involved in the legislative process?

- Find your legislators
- Keep up with the Education and Children Committee
- Testify in Public Hearings
 - In person or on zoom
 - 3 minutes to speak



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Q&A



Call to Action

- **Sign Now** to Contact your legislator through our action center
- **Book a time** with us to share your story
- **Spread the word** and Share what you have learned with 5 other parents



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Thank You

Coralys Santana
Policy & Advocacy Strategist
E:coralyssantana@ctproject.org

Mathias Burner
Engagement & Mobilization Manager
E:mathiasburner@ctproject.org