

From the House

Dear Neighbor,

Connecticut families, currently on the waitlist, can start enrolling in the Care 4 Kids program, the state's primary child care support program. Care 4 Kids helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for child-care costs. Across Connecticut, 98 percent of towns have families that receive Care 4 Kids funding.

This is a column I wrote on Care 4 Kids back in January that I wanted to share.

Fund child care, help the economy

By Matt Ritter

When you have a child, they tell you to start saving for college right away yet child-care costs, in some cases, are on par with college. Maybe we should start telling 10-year-olds to start saving for child-care costs just in case they have a child someday. That of course is written with tongue planted firmly in check.

Nothing will keep hardworking people from pursuing available jobs more than a lack of quality, affordable child care. Unfortunately, at the start of the New Year the state's Care 4 Kids program was forced to add new barriers to the program – they stopped taking applications from people who have received benefits from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families within the last five years, and from 18-year-old parents who attend high school.

Why? In past years, about half of the program's funding was from the federal government. But the feds changed the rules and Connecticut's bill for the program jumped \$33 million – and we had not budgeted for that surge in costs. If the federal government is serious about helping working families this should be one of its top funding priorities.

Care 4 Kids helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for child-care costs. Across Connecticut, 98 percent of towns have families that receive Care 4 Kids funding. Data from the 2015 American Community Survey shows that 31 percent of children under 5 in Connecticut live in families that earn 50 percent of the median income or less. The Care 4 Kids program allows these parents to work so that they can pay for food, a home and find ways out of poverty.

We must keep the doors to quality child care open to working families.

We can't live in a state that forces parents to choose between work and their children. The federal government must do the right thing and fix the mess that they created by funding Care 4 Kids. This program provides incentives to work and ensures that our youngest children have access to a quality education early in life.

Funding this program is a no-brainer.

Matt Ritter is the Majority Leader of the Connecticut House of Representatives. He represents the 1st Assembly District in Hartford.

Additional informational on the Care 4 Kids program can be found by visiting www.ctcare4kids.com or calling 1-888-214-5437

As always, please contact me if I can ever be of any assistance. I can be reached at Matthew.Ritter@cga.ct.gov, on Facebook [@RepresentativeMattRitter](https://www.facebook.com/RepresentativeMattRitter) or by phone at (800) 842-1902, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Matt Ritter

House Majority Leader