

“Morning Without Childcare” Rally Seeks State \$\$

by Mona Mahadevan | May 14, 2025 1:10 pm



Mona Mahadevan photos

Teacher Michelle Herrera, 16-month-old Lilah Lubitz, and mom Zoe Lubitz were excited to show up for childcare workers across Connecticut Wednesday morning.

“In New Haven, 85 percent of third graders are not reading at grade level. That’s not going to be solved in kindergarten,” said Allyx Schiavone, who spoke Wednesday morning to a crowd of over 200 early childhood advocates, teachers, and parents gathered on the Green.

“There is so much human and brain development that happens between 0 to 5,” she continued, “and so we have to give kids support earlier on.”

Schiavone, the executive director of Friends Center for Children, helped organize [the fourth annual “Morning Without Childcare”](#) — a rally from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. that called on legislators to increase public investment in childcare.



Schiavone (right) addresses the crowd.

Fourteen other rallies are scheduled throughout the state, including in Bridgeport, Waterbury, and Hartford.

Aundrea Tabbs-Smith, a well-being coordinator at Friends Center for Children, opened the rally with call-and-response.

“We use call and response to help kids’ brains develop,” she said. “Let’s see if we can use it to get Hartford to listen to us!”

Afterwards, she led chants set to melodies from “Rain Rain Go Away” and “If You’re Happy and You Know It.”

Throughout the rally, speakers highlighted the economic and social strain of the state’s underfunded childcare system: In Connecticut, parents spend an average of 27 percent of their household budgets on childcare, while the average annual wage for childcare workers is just \$34,500. More than 40,000 children have been left without quality care options, costing \$1.5 billion in economic activity.



Aundrea Tabbs-Smith opens the rally with call-and-response at 8 a.m.

Zoe Lubitz, mother to 16-month-old Lilah, joined the rally because she knows firsthand the importance of quality childcare. “Childcare enables me to work, but I also know that there are lots of people who can’t afford quality care, and we’re very lucky that we can,” she said. “I want that for all families.”

On the provider side, Michelle Herrera, Lilah’s teacher at Edith B. Jackson, explained that providers are not being paid “livable wages.” She wants people to recognize that early

childhood education is “an important job,” because providers “help [kids] develop and transform so much within a short period of time.”

Isabella Manzo, a teaching assistant at Alphabet Academy, shared Herrera’s perspective. She loves her job, especially “the students, who are some of the most kind, respectful people that [she has] ever met.” But on her current salary, she is struggling to afford tuition for a master’s degree in elementary education. While she thinks that many reforms to the childcare system are needed, she mostly just wants “the government [to] step up and do something.”

The Capitol might be listening. In February, Gov. Ned Lamont proposed legislation that would create a University Preschool Endowment, which would be



A large crowd braves the rain to gather for the rally.

seeded by \$300 million from the state's 2025 fiscal year surplus. If enacted, preschool would be made available at no cost to families earning up to \$100,000 per year, and 20,000 new preschool slots would be created over the next seven years.



Mayor Justin Elicker says that he believes the State Capitol is on the brink of approving "somewhat revolutionary change" for childcare in Connecticut.

Speakers called on the Connecticut General Assembly to approve Lamont's bill or one of the similar proposals currently being debated in the state legislature.

At the end of the rally, Kim Flores buckled her 11-month-old daughter Sloan into

her stroller. She started sending Sloan to Friends Center for Children when she was just four months old, and over the last seven months, she and her wife have come to believe that Sloan's teachers have "a little bit of magic."

As she and Sloan left the Green, she said that she could not imagine what she would do without the center. Firmly, she stated, "access to affordable and safe childcare should be non-negotiable."



11-month-old Sloan and mom Kim Flores get ready to leave for Friends Center for Children.



Mom Stephanie Innes and teacher Isabella Manzo are passionate about making early childhood education high-quality and accessible throughout Connecticut.