The Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-six years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policy solutions to enhance women’s economic security, combat discrimination, and increase gender equity in Connecticut.

CWEALF also serves as an advocacy partner to Secure Jobs 2.0, multiyear program led by the Melville Charitable Trust and other philanthropic partners to increase the income of families transitioning out of homelessness by connecting them to the education, training, and supports they need to secure and maintain stable employment. In the program's pilot, 87% of participating households were female headed. Access to affordable and reliable child care remains a significant barrier to lift families out of poverty and achieve economic security.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support H.B. 5213: An Act Concerning the Creation of a Pilot Program for an Early Childhood Business Incubator Model.

Home child care centers are key to solving the child care shortage in our state; however, providers face significant barriers to open and maintain their businesses, including landlords or condo associations that do not allow home based businesses, or lack of access to adequate business management training. A business incubator as proposed in H.B. 5213 provides new child care entrepreneurs a supportive place to launch their business and gain business skills essential to the sustainability of their businesses.

Current Connecticut law divides the child care industry into centers and homes. While centers must abide by staffing ratios and more complicated regulations, child care homes (often referred to as a family day care) must be located in the proprietor’s home.

House Bill No. 5213 will allow a person or group of people to operate child care programs in a space other than their home while still adhering to family child care licensing regulations. Ultimately, family child care providers will begin their businesses and build capital in an incubator space, which will then allow them to save funds to eventually transition to a housing arrangement that will support their child care program. This model
allows entrepreneurs to start new child care businesses that support their own families’ economic security while providing a critical service to the community in the form of accessible child care.

House Bill No. 5213 provides an innovative model for family child care that not only addresses existing gaps in access to safe, high quality child care, but also acts as a small business development program that will increase the economic security of entrepreneurs across Connecticut.