

April 30, 2024
Amanda Cennamo
In support of H-7251

Dear House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony. I am in strong support for **Susan Donovan's bill, H-7251, the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.**

My name is Amanda Cennamo and I am an early childhood teacher. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I am advocating for the childhood funding because I have seen vital life improvements from this extra income. Coworkers are able to catch up on bills, afford to restock their pantries or have some money to save to ease their worries .

I started working in the ECE field in 2015 when I was seeking a job that involved children. Teaching the youngest of our future is such a privilege and I enjoy spending my days helping our youngest RI citizens grow and learn!

The biggest challenge with my career is the income. Even with my BA from RIC I find it difficult to make a living wage while working in the ECE field. I have seen many coworkers leave the field as well due to poor income.

The additional wage bonuses have helped me with basic needs like filling my oil tank for home heat or restocking my cupboards. The wage program also benefits the littlest ones in RI. The wage bonuses help job retention which in return keeps the early childhood classrooms filled with steady and dependable teachers to be there daily to care for and teach the children of RI.

I want the state legislators to know that investing in ECE means investing in future leaders of RI. We care for and teach the youngest population in RI. We provide dependable care so parents all across the state can go to work and boost the RI economy. We saw the impact during Covid when daycares closed. It takes a village to raise the next generation but without a livable wage we won't have teachers in place to make this happen.

The Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act will invest \$2.5 million to continue the Child Care WAGE\$ national model program, to provide substantial wage supplements to recognize, reward, and retain qualified and skilled early educators with CDAs, associate's, and bachelor's degrees. This program will end in summer 2024 without new funding.

This act will also invest \$5 million to continue retention bonuses at \$3,000 per year for some early educators, those who are lower-wage, consistent, frontline child care staff, beyond the

projected end date in September 2024 to prevent loss of staff/closure of more classrooms and program.

Our child care providers are essential workers. They are being underpaid and undervalued. They deserve our investment, and it cannot wait. Please support the **Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act**.

Sincerely,

Amanda Cennamo