

April 30, 2024
Diana Low
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

I am able to make ends meet with a housing, food, overall care for my children and less stress in my life. The program elevates the imbalance of what early childhood educators should be making. We play a vital role in shaping the lives of young children and not to mention, if we weren't here people will have no childcare and cause problems for the working middle class. It has been a tremendous help and also is an incentive to further education to climb up the ladder. 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,

Diana Low

April 30, 2024
Donna Fortes
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

Supplement has made me feel more appreciated for my work.

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,

Donna Fortes

April 30, 2024
Emily Franceschi
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

This supplement allowed me to not have to worry about my finances as much as I had in the past. It allowed me to actually have a comfortable amount in my savings account and allowed me to no longer live paycheck to paycheck. Today's economy is far too expensive and being a early education professional unfortunately does not pay well. Living paycheck to paycheck takes a toll on mental well being and can create a very stressful living environment. Please do not discontinue this program, it was nice to finally feel appreciated for what we do and to finally feel recognized as professionals.

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,

Emily Franceschi

April 30, 2024
Emily Vaccaro
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

Daycare providers are not paid enough from the companies they work for due many different reasons. It is one of the biggest reasons early childhood teachers do not stay, loving your job isn't enough anymore. Early childhood teachers want to stay in our fields but are unable because of the cost of living is unreasonably high.

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.

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Sincerely,

Emily Vaccaro

April 30, 2024
Erin Gray
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

The supplement has helped me tremendously in achieving a livable wage in my current position. Without this supplement I was required to work a second job to take care of my basic housing needs and other cost of living expenses. I was able to benefit from the Step Up to WAGE\$ supplement but my co teacher was not offered the grant due to not having enough early childhood credits from school. She has a degree in a related field (elementary education) yet was still not able to receive funding. Without this program I would be consistently needing to work a second job to pay for my basic living needs. When looking for an apartment it was very difficult to find people who would consider me a good tenant because the cost of rent is so high, and they want to see income that is 3x the cost of rent which is almost impossible.

Emma Villa

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.

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Sincerely,

Erin Gray

April 30, 2024
Adys Laboy
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

It helps improve our lives. Please continue to help us. (Todo bien Mejorar la calidad de vida Que nos sigan ayudando).

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,

Adys Laboy

April 30, 2024
Alisha Salerno
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

This benefit has helped me survive financially. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education and I feel my role as a teacher is not comparable to the overall inflation and cost of everything. I do just as much as a public school teacher if not more and my salary is much less. I would like this benefit to continue. I hope the state can find a way to continue this benefit. The turn over rate with teachers is very high due to a low rate of pay. This, in turn leads to hiring less educated and experienced people which leads to a decline in the education of young children. This wage supplement is extremely helpful to ECE teachers. Most of us have degrees and are being paid a very low wage. As inflation continues I am not receiving an increase in pay. This is not due to poor work ethic, it is due to my director having to increase tuition which leads to families having to leave due to higher tuition. Receiving this money has helped me financially which in turn has led me to remain in my position after over 10 years. Without it I will have to pursue a higher paying job somewhere else.

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,

Alishia Salerno

April 30, 2024
Altagracia Polanco
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

I think that is very helpful for us as child care providers because what we earn is not the enough to live in this economic. Address 14 Mowry St providence RI 02908. It help me a little specially because with that money i buy more teaching materials for my program, and help me financially. is some income that helps educators providers to buy teaching materials for the program and help us financially. 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.

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Sincerely,

Altagracia Polanco

April 30, 2024
Altagracia Rojas
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

This is very important for me and my day care. Please continue providing more support. (Muy importante Para mi y mi day care. Continuen proveendo Mas ayuda).

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,

Altagracia Rojas

April 30, 2024
Amalia Pineda
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

I feel very grateful, and it helped me a lot. We need more incentives like this one. It helped a lot as we are under paid, I feel very grateful and it helped me a lot.

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,

Amalia Pineda

April 30, 2024
TEACH NAME
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

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.**

Recently, my husband had to take an unpaid leave from his job to care for a sick family member. Since his job provides the majority of our income, it was hugely helpful to receive the wage supplement. It allowed us peace of mind during this unexpected event. This has been truly beneficial to many people in our field.

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.

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Sincerely,

Amy Ryan

April 30, 2024
TEACH NAME
In Support of H-7251

Dear House Finance,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony. I am in strong support for **Susan Donovan's bill, H7251, the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.**

It very useful and helpful because it's been really hard financially so the program helped me a lot to pay bills and buy things I need for my home. It's important because we are one of the lowest pay in the community and this wages grant really help us.

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,

Annie Arias

April 30, 2024
Aimee Sherman
Assistant Teacher
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 Aimee Sherman and I am a 46 year old wife and mother who has been given the chance to make a recent career move that benefits my whole family, thanks in large part to the financial assistance afforded me by the Step Up To Wages supplement and pandemic education retention bonuses. I am in strong support for Representatives Susan Donovan and Sandra Cano's Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act (Bill S-2038) because it will allow me to stay in a new career that I love.

For 20 years prior to the Covid pandemic, I worked full time as a retail manager for two different, well respected housewares companies. There were certainly aspects of my job that I loved, but I wasn't sure I was really doing something that made me feel like I was making a difference. My husband is also a retail manager and we spent weekends, holidays and evenings at work instead of with our growing daughter making memories. Basically, we felt like that was just "how life was" and kept doing the same over and over, living paycheck to paycheck and dealing with more disgruntled customers than happy faces each day.

When Covid happened, our situation changed like so many others. My retail company closed down all of its East Coast locations and I lost my job in summer of 2020. Since there was no telling when retail would be a viable full time option again, I agreed to go work as a teaching assistant for my mother, who is the founder and director of the Charlestown Early Learning Center in Charlestown, Rhode Island. Truth be told, my mother had been trying to get me into the "family biz" of teaching for years and I just never felt like it was for me. Still, since I had no job and she was offering me a chance to get out of the house for 25 hours a week to play with some small kiddos and be with family, I figured - why not?

I've been asking myself "why not" ever since. Why didn't I leave the stress of retail to be the source of smiles for 3-5 year old children every day? Why did I sell expensive pots and pans to people who really didn't need them instead of teaching the most important things at the most crucial time in a child's development? Why did I only hear customer complaints for 20 years instead of the grateful thank you's from parents who trust me with their most special gift every day? Why did it take me so long to do a job that makes me feel appreciated, respected and loved?

The answer is money, of course. It is so simple. If Covid hadn't forced me to leave, I never would have given up the financial stability of my retail job. If I hadn't received extra financial support from programs like Step Up To Wages, I would not have been able to stay teaching for this long. I would have had to go back to retail when things opened up just to make ends meet and instead, I have been able to work at a job I love and even take 24 credits in Early Childhood Education at CCRI to further my education as an adult.

There are no words to describe what it means to be able to have weekends off and take my daughter to track meets, sleepovers and family events. There is nothing better than enjoying Christmas and Thanksgiving with my family without having to be at work at sunrise the next day. I am so lucky to be able to work with not only my mother, but my sister as well, since she is also a teacher at the center. The family time this job has afforded me is priceless, not to mention the fun and joy of seeing a bunch of preschoolers excited to see me every day.

I want to continue to teach and learn as long as I possibly can. As long as I can afford to, I will stay in the education sector and try to make a difference in the lives of the families in South County; even though I drive an hour from Providence to get there! We all know that teachers are horribly underpaid, especially in a small non-profit like my center, and dedicated people like myself may not be able to continue doing the work they do without extra financial help until wages catch up to the importance of educators. Please consider keeping these programs going so our children can be taught by people who truly care.

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**.

Thank you,

Aimee Sherman

Preschool teaching assistant

Charlestown Early Learning Center

April 30, 2024
Alejandra Flores
Family Childcare Provider
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.**

These funds have been a relief to my program. It has been a comfort knowing that there are certain financial funds available to be able to pay the bills that come up each month. Food prices, we all know, have skyrocketed, and I must offer nutritious food to the children in my care; these funds help with that purchase. The children in the classroom always need something new to study or some material to replace; without these funds, it would not be possible.

As a provider, I have felt encouraged to continue studying, and the certificates in early childhood education that I have achieved with much sacrifice are celebrated with this incentive. Sometimes, as an adult, it is very difficult to achieve because of time, family, and fatigue after 10-12 hours of working with children.

Thank you for this initiative and this incentive to invite new generations of providers to come and stay in this field of work and train future professionals for our society. Our children are our future and they deserve quality early care and education.

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.

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

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Sincerely,

Alexandra Flores

April 30, 2024
Alishia Salerno
Preschool Teacher
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.**

Hello, my name is Alishia Salerno and I'm an early childhood preschool teacher. I have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and have been working with children for many years. I am advocating for the early Childhood Stabilization Act ever since high school. I knew I wanted to work with children. I wanted to offer children high quality education. While meeting their individual needs. And making a difference in their lives. Working in the. Early childhood field has become difficult for me to. To low wage in an increased inflation. I believe that the low rate. Of pay has caused a staffing crisis. Therefore, the level of quality. Education has decreased the step up wage has helped retain educators and increases the long term benefits of the children's educational success as inflation. Continues to increase by hourly wage is not sufficient to meet my living expenses. The step up wage benefit has helped. Me to continue my very important work. I think state legislators need to understand the importance of early while her educators and the positive outcome of children's performance and future. We as early childhood educators need to be recognized and compensated. Often and appropriately.

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.

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Sincerely,

Alishia Salerno

April 30, 2024

Alysia Polion

Assistant Teacher

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 Alysia Polion and I am an Paraprofessional and Early Childhood teacher assistant at Tri-County CAA and I am also a past parent of an early childhood program. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I am advocating for early childhood funding because teachers work extremely hard to provide a nurturing, safe, educational environment for young children and the wages we receive do not compensate nor reflect for the effort that is put in.

I chose to become an Early Childhood Educator because my son was in a program, and I thought the work they did was great in all aspects! From outreach screenings, parent guidance/ information, nutrition, social emotional development, and the supports they offered were helpful to all in need. I got my RIDE TA Certification and Preschool CDA to be in this field.

Challenges is the work field are low wages, understaffing, which creates pressure when you need to call out or are sick. Also there are alot more children who were babies during COVID coming into programs with speech, behavior and social emotional due to being home and not being exposed to normal interactions and social surroundings.

I would like state legislators to know that the early childhood field is extremely important to our future and due to the low wages and high expectations more and more people are choosing to leave the field, for higher paying jobs at fast food chains that require no experience or training. It is statistically proven that children who have been in an early education program are more ready and prepared when they get to Kindergarten.

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.

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Sincerely,

Alysia Polion

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.

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Sincerely,

Amanda Cennamo

April 30, 2024
Aruna Rajaratnam
Assistant Teacher
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 Aruna Rajaratnam. I have been an assistant teacher in the PreK room for the past 18 years. I have my associate degree in early childhood education. Working in this field is certainly not easy when it comes to how much I make. The Early Educator Compensation have been greatly appreciated and was a welcoming reward. Please continue with it.

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.

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Sincerely,

Aruna Rajaratnam

April 30, 2024
Debra Vickers
In support of H-7251

My name is Deb Vickers and I am an early childhood educational coordinator. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act. Early childhood funding is imperative for organizations to retain staff and to provide quality care and education for our children.

I started in this field when I was in High School. This field has always been a passion for me. I love working with children and being a part of educating our future population. Later in life I went back to school and got my BA in Early Childhood. I am now working on my Masters.

One of the biggest challenges for us right now is gaining and retaining qualified staff. Many people have opted to work for places like McDonalds and other chains because the pay is much more, and the work is less demanding.

Step Up to Wages has helped me personally to stay in the field that I love. I watch many of our teachers struggle daily to pay their living expenses. Many of them are dedicated and do not want to leave the field, but unfortunately, they have no choice due to low wages. These payments help them to hold their heads above water and stay in the field they love. Our children benefit from having consistent teachers that stay with them and are dedicated to their education.

The time between birth and age three is when children have rapid brain development. Their experiences that they have with us as educators affect the development of the brain, which provides a foundation for future learning, behavior, and health. We help them to develop the skills that they need to become well-functioning adults. Our field is Rhode Islands future.

Thank you,

Debra Vickers

April 30, 2024
Diane Kingston
Assistant Teacher
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.**

I have been an early childhood educator for over thirty years. It is a program I strongly believe is important to help the children and families receive the support needed to succeed. We work very hard to provide the best education for young children. However, the pay we receive is very low compared to most educational institutions. _These programs have been a tremendous support to help me over the last few months with financial assistance, the cost of living, and paying for utilities. I have been able to use the funding to help with my educational needs, buying books and taking tests to further myself. This funding is a great support to all Early Childhood Educators.

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.

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Sincerely,

Diane Kingston

April 30, 2024
Dionicia Reynoso
Family Child Care Provider
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.**

It benefited me in many circumstances. The program should continue.

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.

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Sincerely,

Dionicia Reynoso

April 30, 2024
Ebonee Brown
Lead Teacher
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.**

The supplement has made an impact on my mental health. After receiving the funds, I was able to catch up on bills and buy food to feed my kids. This was a huge help. I actually cried.

The Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act will invest \$2.5 million to continue the Childcare 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.

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Sincerely,

Ebonee Brown

April 30, 2024
Emily Franceschi
Lead Teacher
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.**

Hi, my name is Emily Franceschi and I am one of the many early educators in Rhode Island. I am 24 years old and I work at Dr. Daycare in Cumberland RI. I am currently a student at CCRI and will be graduating in May with my associate in early education. I wanted to write this as a way to show what the Rhode Island Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act has done for me personally. I live on my own with my boyfriend and I am financially independent from my parents, they are willing to help me out when I need it, but as an adult I don't want to have to rely on my parents for assistance when it comes to bills, plus my parents don't have all sorts of money to be loaning me either. I am essentially living paycheck to paycheck, and this is causing me to experience severe stress and anxiety. The compensation act allowed me to breathe, I was able to live comfortably for a while once the WAGES check was deposited into my account because it allowed me to not have to worry about my bank account and all the bills I had. Prior to these acts being passed I was working two jobs while attending school just to make ends meet, and I am about to have to go back to doing that. I was exhausted during that period of my life and having the ability to leave that second job allowed me to put all I had into the center that I work at. I believe that early educators should be properly compensated for the work they do. I worked a 10-hour shift today, which is my daily shift, except for Thursdays at the moment due to school, with eight infants. The early years are crucial to proper development, there is research which states that birth-three is crucial to a child's overall development. We are helping form the minds of the future of this world and in my opinion that is an extremely important job. Not to mention, without childcare so many families would not be able to work and therefore would result in the economy taking a massive hit if there weren't early educators and centers where children could attend. Because of issues such as low pay, many qualified educators are steering away from the field of education because let's face it, it is not an easy field to be in and we are severely underpaid for what we do. I love my job but sometimes I wonder if I will ever have to leave this field in order to sustain a livable salary, especially when I am ready to start a family. I implore you, please do not cut these funds from early educators. These children need qualified individuals in their classrooms and without proper compensation, the number of qualified educators will eventually diminish, especially in today's economy. I encourage you to visit an early learning center and see what a day in the life of an early educator looks like.

The Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act will invest \$2.5 million to continue the Child Care WAGES 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,

Emily Franceschi

April 30, 2024

Erica Basker

Assistant Teacher

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.**

I am a toddler teacher. The funds provided has helped me with supplies in the classroom to do fun projects with the children and its also helped me with my personal bills.

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,

Erica Basker

April 30, 2024

Gloria Romano

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.**

I have been in the Daycare for 24 years. I love being with the children, teaching and making a difference in their lives by showing support and love. Having the retention bonus has helped me with my cost of living. I depend on these bonuses to help with mortgage and bills. I love my work but unfortunately, I do not make a lot of money in this business and would really like to stay at this job.

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 childcare 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,

Gloria Romano

April 30,2024

Jennifer Butts

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.**

I have a master's degree in psychology but I have always been drawn to working with children. I have been working in a Daycare/ preschool setting for 23 years. I am about to get my infant/toddler CDA through the free classes at CCRI. I would really like my preschool CDA but cannot if this program ends. The \$750 bonus helped me keep my head above water.

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,

Jennifer Butts

April 30, 2024

Karen Kuski

Administrator, Education Coordinator

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 Karen Kuski. I am the administrator, education coordinator at CLE in North Kingstown, I have been employed here since 2005.

I am also the mother of four and the grandmother of seven. I raised ten children before returning back to work in the field in 2005. Four of the children were my own and six were children that I took into my home, cared for them and loved them as if they were my own.. I am also a student at RIC to earn my Masters Degree.

I love my job and working with children. Half of my day is spent in the classroom working directly with the children. I am passionate about giving all the children in my care the best start that I can. I enjoy seeing them grow and develop into unique personalities. Supporting families and celebrating the diversity in each is also a learning experience for me. This is a rewarding and fulfilling job.

I am an older employee, For years I had no health care benefits because my employer could not afford to pay for them and neither could I. That is scary for any person, but especially an older person. Once covid came to be, I did qualify for benefits through HealthSource RI. Before that I was penalized yearly on my taxes because I was not able to pay for health care.

During covid, daycares and early learning centers were deemed essential. Therefore, I worked. I was not able to collect the extra \$600 weekly stipend that others collected in their unemployment checks. Daycare workers were out in the thick of things, taking

chances with their own health, and not being able to receive the additional compensation that others were receiving.

Early education supports behavior, positive development and social emotional growth Centers also provide a safe, healthy environment for children while their parents are working. Therefore, we are supporting the families and their jobs. We are helping children and families to grow and reach their potential growth and development.

On the administrator side, I am unable to give my employees a raise, Many of them are deserving of a raise. The money is just not there. We are asking educators to get further training and education, giving them more and more responsibilities, yet we are only offering minimum wage. There is a Burger King two blocks from the center that is paying \$17 an hour. I am unable to compete with that! We have the safety and health of these children in our hands all day and I happen to think that is quite a responsibility!

Because I cannot offer a competitive wage to my employees, I am unable to hire and find myself filling in in the classrooms more often than not. Without the proper number of staff to meet ratios, I am not able to enroll to my capacity. That is another cause for finances to fall short. This has been a huge challenge.

I was very grateful to be eligible for the WAGES compensation. These funds gave me a little bit of wiggle room in my personal day to day life. Prices have gone up on everything, yet we have not received any cost of living raise. I was able to catch up on some bills, stock up on some things for my freezer. I also bought things for the classrooms that the teachers needed. I was not able to buy them with my center's budget.

For the first time in many years, I was able to put some money into my savings account. That gave me some flexibility and helped to ease my mind a bit.

At Christmastime, I was able to give a sizable donation to the little free library in my community so that they could purchase books, school supplies and other items for the area children and those in a nearby shelter. If it had not been for the WAGES compensation, none of this would have been possible.

Providing for early childcare workers is essential. The early childhood workers provide early childhood experiences. These experiences from birth to age 8, affect the development of the brain's architecture, providing the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. A strong foundation helps children develop the skills they need to become well-functioning adults. The experiences children have early in life play a crucial role in the development of the brain. Exposure to positive factors, stable and responsive relationships with parents and other adults, and safe and supportive environments

promote positive development. The early childhood workers are providing this service to children and their families on a daily basis.

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,

Karen E. Kuski

April 30, 2024

Katelyn Crudale,

Assistant Teacher

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 Katelyn Crudale, and I am an early childhood parent and teacher. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I became a mother in 2015. Before then, I earned my associate degree in culinary arts. My dream was to be in a kitchen, travel, and open my own restaurant. I never thought I would be a mother. And then my oldest came into my life, and everything turned around. I started working jobs that were the 9-5 "mommy hours" because my life now circled around this little human. And in 2016, 2018, and 2020 I had my next three children. I bet you are wondering what that has to do with why I chose a future in ECE. Let me explain, my two middle children have special needs, we went through the IEP process, and they are excelling in school with the help of their supportive teachers and therapists. My youngest has seizures and I am currently working with the public school system to put his IEP together. Going through all this with my children has shown me where I really belong. My goals changed because I changed. My children showed me my true passion in early childhood education. I want to be the change to children, specifically special needs children.

I am advocating for early childhood funding because it makes a difference. It helps the teachers to provide for their families. If you think about it, teachers of any grade, whether its daycare, preschool, PreK, or k-12, we do not make much financially. We do our jobs because we love our careers, we love making a difference in children's lives. I have been able to keep the lights on, take my kids to museums and buy extras for my classroom. I was able to buy specific books, paints, playdough, and activities that I wanted for my students specifically. I have been able to provide holiday special activities, Christmas gifts, family gifts, and so much more. It may not seem like much to others, but it is life changing for us.

While working in early childhood I have had to learn daily, not just how to be a teacher but how to be a caregiver for each child. All needs are different, and you need to figure out

what each child needs specifically. Every child is unique and has different learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. It can be difficult to plan lesson plans and activities that cater to everyone, but this is also incredibly rewarding.

The early childhood field is not easy, it is a fight daily. But we love what we do. But the pay does not match what we do for the communities. The extra "bonuses" like step up to wage\$, is something that shows us we are appreciated. We take care of your children so you can earn your living. Without daycares and schools' parents would not be able to make their careers. Approve the funding for your children, for your children's teachers, approve it because teachers are the steppingstone for every other career you could have.

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,

Katelyn Crudale

April 30, 2024
Kristina Erbe
Lead Teacher
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.**

It helps us teachers feel a little more appreciated. Especially those of us that work in early childhood programs where we are not appreciated as much as educators. A lot of things cater more towards those working in elementary ed and up, so it's nice that we were able to receive this money as well!

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,

Kristina Erbe

April 30, 2024
Laura Cline
Lead Teacher
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.**

I just celebrated my 20th year anniversary of working in child care on March 8th. It was a happy occasion marked by a surprise celebration dinner put together by my amazing coworkers. While it was such a special day, it also made me think, how many of those coworkers that celebrated with me, will be around this time next year? The reality of the situation is, we as early childhood educators, make a sad amount of money for the work that we put in, for the money we spend out of our OWN pockets putting together an exceptional curriculum and experiences for children and for the amount of lives that we make a difference in. Think about just how many children will walk thru the doors of ALL the centers in RI this year. How many will be taught by some of the most dedicated professionals in the field. Now think about how many teachers are working 10+ hours a day because we can't keep staff in our buildings. How many teachers go home exhausted at night to their own families after working so hard and so many hours. How many teachers will have a hard time providing for their families with the meager amount of money from their paychecks. It's no secret that the majority of us make hardly enough to live on as single adults, never mind those with families. I am a 43 year old woman who has never been able to purchase my own home because I chose to stay in a profession that I love, knowing it would mean I would be splitting rent with others, never able to be a homeowner myself. I have been paying on my student loans for 21 years... often times having to defer them because I can't afford living expenses, bills, car payments, groceries and insurance alongside a large student loan payment. We teach young children basic life skills. We encourage them to roll over, take their first steps, experience sensory and art activities. We teach them their colors, shapes, numbers, alphabet. We teach them how to wash their own hands, use the potty for the first time, interact and problem solve with their peers, manage their feelings. We comfort them when they are sick, often times becoming sick with everything that they have. We are second moms and dads to little students who don't always have stable home lives. We love them, encourage them, support them like they are our own children. We form deep connections with them before we send them off into the world of elementary school. We do so much and yet we get so little monetarily for our love, work and dedication. I can't tell you how many promising teachers I have seen in my 20 years, come through the door and last 6 months to a year because they can't afford life on an early childhood educators pay. How many wonderful teachers who would have had such an impact on the lives of the students in their classrooms, that left to get jobs at the bank, retail stores, public school system... basically anywhere else because

everywhere else pays more. How sad will it be when daycares start closing their doors because they can't keep teachers? There is always a need for early childhood centers. There are always children but there won't always be places for them to go if teachers keep leaving to find higher paying jobs. We NEED more! With all that we have given, It's time for you to start doing more for us!

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**.

Thank you,
Laura Cline

April 30, 2024

Lee Ann Connors

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.**

I am a single homeowner, and this was a great deal of help with bills. It also allowed me to have some extra money to provide some fun and exciting items for my class, to create projects and gifts for their parents. I appreciate this program and I am grateful for any programs in the future.

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,

Lee Ann Connors

April 30, 2024
Lourdes Urena
Family Childcare Provider
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.**

It benefited me in many circumstances. I could fix the bathroom, The program should continue to create new opportunities. The wage was an excellent incentive.

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.

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Sincerely,

Lourdes Urena

TOTS' TOWN INC. CHILD CARE CENTER

Mary S Castrignano, Owner
29 George Waterman Rd., Johnston, RI 02919
Telephone & Fax (401)231-6996

April 30 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Mary S. Castrignano. I am an Early childhood educator. I am the owner of TOTS' TOWN INC., CHILD CARE CENTER. I have been open for 34 years. My center is small and only has capacity for 14 students. I employ a staff of three. I offer child care for children ages 12 months to 5. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act. I also accept children receiving childcare assistance through the State.

I opened up my childcare facility to care for my own two children and found a substantial need to offer services for young children to working families.

The biggest challenge in this field is having consistent enrollment. Children and their families come and go. They change jobs and move. The hardest challenge was when COVID hit. Most families began working from home and it affected my enrollment. Funding from the State kept me afloat during this time, but getting full enrollment was still critical, but still doesn't compensate for what a center charges itself.

Step Up to Wages came along at just the right time. This funding has helped me pay my utility bills, rent and purchase supplies. This helps me be able to continue to care for my students in a positive and caring way.

Childcare workers are essential workers. We are undervalued. We deserve this investment and cannot wait. Please support the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

Thank you very much. Your assistance in this special matter is greatly needed and much appreciated.

Mary S. Castrignano, Owner

April 30, 2024

Michelle Bowab

Lead Teacher

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.**

I have worked in the field of Early Education for over twenty years. As an educator and a parent of two children I understand how important it is for parents to have good quality programs where their children are learning at a developmentally appropriate level that meets their unique abilities. Since the pandemic I see a great deal of anxiety and lack of self help skills among our youth. It is important for these children to have stability and continuity in their growth.

It is hard for us Educators to maintain a living in this most important field with the low wages and staff shortages. Today I was at home with my child who was sick and unable to attend school. With my husband traveling for work I had no choice, but to ask for a substitute. Unfortunately due to staff shortages my classroom could not run at full capacity and the families were forced to make other arrangements.

These wages may not seem like much for many, but means a lot for us Early Educators. This allows us to put funds away for our children's educations, high living expenses, and future investments. I have loved every minute of teaching in this field, but even I have recently wondered if this will be sufficient for my future. I spend many hours at home planning, putting my own funds into my classroom, and do not get much flexibility with personal time due to lack of staffing. We celebrate, laugh, cry, and work together with many families throughout the years. In the end we want the same outcome for each child to feel like they were supported and mattered.

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.

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,

Michelle Bowab

April 30, 2024
Missy Renninger
Lead Teacher
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 Missy Renninger and I have worked in the early childhood field since 2007. As the oldest of 12 cousins I have always loved children and babies. Since as long as I can remember, if you asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up I would/will always say teacher.

I received my early childhood certificate and started in my first role as a lead teacher for a young toddler room. I realized quickly that this was not a sustainable income and I would never be able to live financially independent. I considered many other career paths throughout my career in the ECE field that would make considerably more money, but I know in my heart that in the classroom is where I am meant to be and where I will be so long as it remains a viable profession.

The quarterly retention bonuses have allowed me to pay down a significant amount of debt, provided motivation to remain in a career that I love, and serves as tangible evidence that my industry is valued by my community and the state of Rhode Island at a time the field is hemorrhaging staff nationwide.

I appreciate having the opportunity to share my story with the Education Committee and it is my sincere hope that the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act passes. This bill will help breathe life into a struggling field I and so many of my colleagues see as our calling.

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,

Missy Renninger

April 30, 2024
Nicole Ortiz
In support of H-7251

My name is Nicole Ortiz and I am an early childhood educator. I am advocating for Susan Donovan's bill, H-7251, the the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act. I am advocating for early childhood funding to improve the lives of children and families. Teaching children of all backgrounds and capabilities is not an easy task. Teachers need training, knowledge, and experience. The result will improve the lives of children and families.

I come from a large family. Our mothers are our first teachers. A love of children, family, and others is why I chose this field.

One of the main challenges in this field is that the wages are very low for assistants and teachers.. This makes it difficult to find trained, knowledgeable, and experienced teachers. This is a circle that keeps going around because the pay is so low.

These compensation payments encourage teachers to remain in this field and entice future employees to join the field.

I want the state legislatures to know that we the teachers, mothers, and grandmothers take our job very seriously. We hold the future in our hands. We have love in our hearts but we have our own families to support. We encourage you to continue funding this field as training, experience, time, and money is the only way to insure that we have qualified, experienced teachers.

Thank you,

Nicole Ortiz

April 30, 2024
Rebecca Peckham
Education Coordinator
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 Rebecca Peckham and I am an early childhood education coordinator. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I have worked in the early childhood education field for the past twelve years, and the work is the most rewarding I have ever been involved in. Having been at the same center for so long, I have seen firsthand the consequences of low pay across the entire field - there is a high turnover and finding qualified, quality educators is difficult. This has a negative impact on the children we care for, and it is easy to see that unless major changes are made, the field will continue to suffer. In turn, our children and communities will continue to suffer.

I have always worked with children - as a teenager, I babysat regularly, and I have nannied for military families in the past. I come from a large extended family, and grew up always having someone to play with and younger cousins to help look after. It felt natural to me as an adult to want to work with children, because I had always done so.

I happened into my job through a stroke of luck. Our center is located within a YMCA, and at the time, I was working part time in the membership office when I told my director my hours would be changing, in order to go back to school for early childhood education. It was at this point that I was informed that our preschool was hiring for teacher assistants. I spoke with the director, was hired full time, and have been working for the center since. I began as a full-time teacher assistant for a couple of years before becoming a lead teacher, and eventually I was offered the position of education coordinator, which I have been doing for several years. I have grown with the center over the past twelve years and cannot in all honesty, see myself in any other field. There is nothing more rewarding to me than being involved in a child meeting a developmental milestone, or mastering a task that they previously struggled with. Knowing that I have made a positive difference in the life of a child is far worth the hard days.

The biggest challenges I and my staff face as early childhood educators are financial. Many, if not all of us within our center, work more than one job. None of us live as single adults - we all live with significant others, family, or roommates - because none of us can afford housing on our own. We spend our own money on classroom supplies such as books, art supplies, and other materials to keep the children engaged and excited to learn. There have been many times I have had to come to work under the weather simply because there was no staff available to substitute, or because I just couldn't afford financially, to miss work. The financial hardships we constantly battle create their own difficulties - relationships become strained, and the stress we are under causes our physical and mental health to suffer.

I was incredibly hopeful to be granted the Step Up to Wages funding. It would have allowed me to pay off my debt and create a healthy track moving forward. However, none of the funding was available for me at the time I applied, and it was a devastating blow. I received the pandemic bonus of \$750 every three months, and the feeling of being able to pay my bills every third month was a sigh of relief. I had really hoped that this funding would become available again - because while it would have helped me financially, it also would have allowed me to purchase some of the materials I dream of having for the children I work with to be able to utilize.

I genuinely feel that without a stable, well-functioning early childhood education field, we as a country are nothing. It is where a child's learning truly begins and provides a foundation for both their academic and personal learning far into their adult years. Children need to be able to learn the way they should - through play. They need to experience meaningful, positive social interaction with both their peers and adults. Without early childhood education, we will struggle in other fields, because if children have no one to teach them, how will they become competent adults who have the mental capacities to lead us as a country into the future? There is a massive difference in early childhood education today versus the early childhood education field I formally stepped into twelve years ago, and while we continue to learn and grow as educators with each year, the restraints and obstacles we face continue to hold us back and restrict what we are able to do for our most vulnerable, most important community members.

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,

Rebecca Peckham

April 30, 2024
Renee Pepler
Assistant Teacher
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.**

I've been in the field for about fifteen years. Many years of experience. I only have a few classes that were for an Early childhood Degree., the rest of my classes were for Human Resources. I feel that my experience in the classroom is just as important. I'm speaking out for those of us who've made a difference in the numerous lives of young children and their families. Childcare/preschool etc is the foundation of our society, yet we are not being compensated. We are expected to do hours of P.D. and aren't compensated for that either. We are dedicated to our students and families, and we deserve more. 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.

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Sincerely,

Renee Pepler

April 30, 2024

Samantha Pescarino

Assistant Teacher

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.**

Good afternoon - My name is Samantha Pescarino. I work at the Goddard School in South Kingstown and have been an employee at this center since April of 2015. I began my journey in this field as an assistant teacher with my only prior experience being babysitting, my church's bible camp and a love for working with the youth. In the last 9 years I transitioned roles into a lead toddler teacher and then most recently, a center wide curriculum coordinator. I have always worked full time and was present the day our center opened back up shortly after the pandemic shut down, throughout my pregnancy until I gave birth and as I attended school at CCRI and then RIC, graduating magna cum laude in May of 2023. While I was told I did not have enough of the requirements necessary to qualify for the Step Up To WAGE\$ even with my almost decade of experience or degree in Psychology with a minor in Behavioral Neuroscience, I find it absolutely critical that those who do fall under these qualifications are advocated for. I was fortunate however to have qualified for the retention bonuses which have made a SIGNIFICANT impact on my life in helping me afford groceries, diapers and clothing for my child, rent, and overall general life expenses. I myself struggle weekly to provide for myself and my daughter. I have stayed in this field even knowing I can barely make ends meet for my daughter and I because of the relationships I have built with families, the owners of my center and the co-workers that have stuck through it all. I have seen so much turnover staff wise in my time, and I would say the majority of it is due to low wages resulting in the inability to thrive comfortably in this economy, long hours, and inconsistencies within the classroom environment staffing wise. I have such a passion for working with children and post-pandemic children need our support more than ever. The retention bonus's give childcare workers an incentive for being a consistent face in these little human's lives during these vital formative years. Please give support where it is necessary. These children will be our future and deserve caretakers who genuinely stick around because they love what they do every single day. 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,

Samantha Pescarino

April 30, 2024
Stephanie Parent
Assistant Teacher
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.**

The purpose of this email is to inform you what this money has meant to me. I have been able to pay off financial debts, as well as save money for my daughter's college fund. I have also been able to purchase a new washer and two new windows. It might not seem like much but this money has been a true blessing. Please consider keeping this money available. As people are living paycheck to paycheck and it would help with bills, food and basic needs. It's always nice to be appreciated for the hard work we do daily. I thank you for reading this and truly hope you consider keeping these funds available.

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.

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Best regards,

Stephanie Parent

April 30, 2024
Tanya Petrone
Lead Teacher
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 Tanya Petrone. I've been an early childhood educator for 15 years. I have a BA and I am certified to teach Pre-k to grade 2 in the state of RI. I paid my own way through college. Because I lived at home I was not able to qualify for any financial aid. I was awarded a 300.00 pell grant it paid one book. I had to take out private student loans because I did not qualify for federal again because I lived at home. My parents could not afford to pay for my college, they provided the roof over my head. I worked through high school and college to try and save but it was not enough. I ended up with about 40,000 in private student loans with a high interest rate. In 2009 I had to leave the early childhood field because I could not afford to pay my student loan bill. I was not being paid enough at the time. In 2013 I was able to return to teaching now with my early childhood certification and a BA degree in hand. Still not making the money I had hoped for, but I was just grateful to be back working with children. I love teaching and the children. That's is why early childhood do what they do. We work very hard all year long! We work all 12 months out of the year no school vacations no summers off. We choose it because we love the age group and the teaching profession. We work our tails off and in my opinion are not considered as real teachers. We are daycare and baby sitters to most people, and honestly we are paid maybe a little more money than a fast food worker. I knew I was never going to make millions teaching, but I never thought that I would struggle to make ends meet. This is why this program is so important. I have to say no one wants to work in early childhood right now. We are very short staffed at my center and it is very hard to find qualified teachers. People are stepping away from the field because of the pay grade and the amount of work we do. This is why programs like this are so very important to fund and keep going! Early childhood teachers need to be recognized for all the work they do! This program has helped me out financially more than you can imagine. I am so grateful to be one of the teachers that were chosen to receive this grant. This grant has also given me the opportunity to purchase some new items for my classroom. On a personal level it made me feel valued, has given me hope, and has given me incentive to stay in the field. Many times I had considered leaving for financial reasons. However I know I would not be happy doing another job. Teaching is so rewarding to me I know I'm out there making a difference in children's lives. Please continue to fund these grant programs for early childhood teachers they are essential to this future of this profession.

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.

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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,

Tanya Petrone

April 30, 2024

Toni Rose

Administrative Assistant/floater

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.**

Hello, my name is Toni Rose and I work at Brown Fox Point Early Childhood Education Center, Inc. I have worked here for sixteen years since 2007 and before that I ran a home childcare for ten years. I have been in this profession for twenty-six years.

My current position is administrative assistant/floater. I started off as an assistant teacher but due to an operation I came out of the classroom to become an office assistant but also started floating due to lack of staff. The shortage of staff especially qualified staff has always been a problem, but it just has intensified after the pandemic especially with seasoned providers leaving the profession. Younger providers are not trying to stay in this profession due to I believe low wages and lack of respect for people who have chosen to care for our young children. We are underpaid and, in some cases, overworked because of the shortage of staff. People need childcare and we need livable wages.

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.

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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,

Toni Rose

April 30, 2024
Whitney Holl
Lead Teacher
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 Whitney Holl, and I am a preschool teacher. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I have worked in the ECE for over 15 years in a variety of different roles, including home daycare provider, teacher assistant, and lead teacher. One of the biggest problems that I see in my field is the high amount of turnover. It is so difficult to attract educated, reliable, qualified ECE workers and to keep them. This high turnover rate is bad for the children in our care – children who need consistency and to know that their teachers are going to continue to be at school for them to nurture and care for them. As ECE workers, we are constantly told how important our work is, how crucial it is to provide a high-quality learning environment for our young learners, and how what we do on a daily basis will influence the development of the children in our care. However, it is very discouraging to drive by fast food and gas station “Hiring” signs that advertise a wage higher than what I earn at my child care center. How can my work be so important, yet the pay does not reflect this at all?

The Step Up to WAGE\$ Supplement has made a huge impact on my and my family's lives. These wage supplements make it possible to earn a more competitive wage, which is extremely important for the financial wellbeing of my family. Several of the individuals I work with are paycheck to paycheck families. Without this WAGE\$ Supplement, they fall short every single month. Maybe it's only a small amount, or maybe it was a month that they got hit with \$300+ of medical bills, but there are only so many weeks and months that can go by in the negative before a change has to be made. In this case, that change would mean leaving not only the child care center, children, and coworkers that we love, but also the ECE field entirely – which is the exact type of thing that the WAGE\$ Supplement is trying to help prevent.

The WAGE\$ Supplement is a crucial program for all early childhood educators. Please vote to continue this program.

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,

Whitney Holl

April 30, 2024
Yolanda Crockett
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.**

I experienced emergency family issues, and this helped me greatly. More contact from wages to keep our information or updated information to continue receiving wages.

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,

Yolanda Crockett

April 30, 2024

Yesenia Hayden

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 address is 148 Rosemere Road Pawtucket, RI 02861. I have used the supplement to purchase additional materials for my early child care program. It is very helpful to continue to receive these funds because it allows me to keep my program open. (Address: 148 Rosemere Rd Pawtucket RI 02861, He utilizado mi suplemento para obtener recursos adicionales para mi clase o programa de cuidado infantil. Es de mucha ayuda continuar con estos fondos, Porque me ayuda a continuar con mi programa abierto, Porque es de mucha ayuda para mi programa).

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,

Yesenia Hayden

April 30, 2024

Victoria Ballou

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.**

It's a great opportunity!

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,

Victoria Ballou

April 30,2024

Sharon Hanson

In support of bill, 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.**

This supplement has been extremely beneficial. Most important is the increase in quality care for my students by implementing new interesting areas in my classroom by purchasing new supplies. The supplement has helped me with personal bills I usually have a difficult time paying. Eliminating some of those financial stressors makes for a much happier life. Knowing I wouldn't have to worry about those bills means I can further dedicate myself to my students. his supplement has helped my household bills tremendously. It has eliminated some financial stresses that make day-to-day life more manageable. I have been able to provide extra supplies for my classroom, increasing my student's enthusiasm and enhancement to learning. The most important aspect of the wage supplement is the fact that I would be able to continue to bring quality care to my classroom. Working with young children has been my passion and education for the past 25 years. It's my career, not just a job. Without the supplement I may be forced to seek other employment for financial reasons only. I would be devastated to leave a field I dedicated my life to but may not have any other choice without the supplement. I am extremely grateful that you let me be a part of the 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,

Sharon Hanson

April 30, 2024

Sol Segarra

Teacher

Dear House Finance Committee,

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

It has help me be more at ease in being able to provide food at my home and buy materials for my classroom.

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,

Sol Segarra

April 30, 2024

Tynicka Tilman

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.**

These funds can allow me to pay off previous debts I acquired as a first generation college student trying to make my own way in the world. These financial opportunities are life changers for childcare workers across the country. It is the difference between struggling and excelling. It is the difference between going to work to make a living and pursuing your passion in a career that you love. It allows childcares to retain great teachers although they cannot afford to match the pay rate of public school teachers (although it may also hard for teachers that work in public schools, they receive many benefits that child care workers do not- summer vacations, school breaks, better health plans, 401k plans, teacher unions, retirement benefits, loan forgiveness, etc).

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,

Tynicka Tilman

April 30, 2024

Tanya Petrone Aldrich

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.**

I'm very grateful for this program. It has taken off a great deal of stress in my life financially. If it had not been for this program I would not have been able to keep any money in my savings account for emergencies. I have a 16 year old car that often needs repairs because I'm not able to afford a newer one. This money helps me save for a newer more reliable and safe car. Thank you so very much to you all for advocating to early childhood teachers! I often feel like people don't realize how hard we work all year around. This wage is so very important to early childcare workers most of us who have been in the field are educated and our pay does not reflect it often. We stay because we love what we do! With cost of living going up and up most employers can not give us higher wages. The funding of this program is extremely important to employers and employees!

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,

Tanya Petrone Aldrich

April 30, 2024

Stefanie Eisemann

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.**

The program eased some financial stress in my home; I have bought some materials for my classroom and it is helping with some unexpected medical costs. It was helpful and made me feel like my level of education and contributions to the educational systems in RI, in the early education that I provide, was valued and appreciated. This supplement helps individuals working with our youngest children feel validated, and the supplemental pay eases some of the financial burden at home potentially helping with employee retention, which benefits children in our care.

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.

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Sincerely,

Stefanie Eisemann