

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