

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