

My name is Laura Liddle and I am the owner and director of Ocean State Kidz Club. I am advocating for the Susan Donovan's bill, H-7251, the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act. I have been in the childcare field my entire life as a student, volunteer, staff director, and now owner.

It is extremely important to shed light on the current challenges and hardships of working in early childhood education.

The hourly wages staff are receiving are not comparable to making a living. Never mind a decent living. Currently, all of our staff have second or third jobs just to make ends meet. Being an educator in the childcare field is a STRUGGLE!

The retention bonuses have been helping in retaining staff for at least a year or two. It has helped staff pay their bills on time and be able to continue to work at our center. Unfortunately it was not enough as two lead staff have moved onto the healthcare field with greater wages and sign on bonuses. I can't imagine what is going to happen if we do not receive the extra support and funding to keep this program going.

Receiving STEP UP wages allowed us to pay our staff Christmas bonuses and give small raises. It is important educators are being compensated for their education, this is exactly what the STEP UP WAGES program provides. Staff with Bachelor degrees are making \$15 to \$17 an hour, if that. How can we expect someone coming out of college with a Bachelors degree to want to be employed for less than \$16 per hour?

If we don't support educators in the field, when working families need care, there will not be enough high quality centers available and your child may have 2 or 3 teachers within a year due to the high turnover rate.

I can't imagine being a new mother and bringing my child to an early learning center and each month a new staff member is caring for my child. This is detrimental to the child's growth and development. Not to mention this is already happening in centers.

The childcare sector needs your help and support. It is extremely difficult to maintain a high quality program and high quality staff if the average hourly rate is \$14 to \$15 per hour.

Please consider and pass the compensation act, our livelihood depends on this!

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Laura Liddle
Owner