

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