

April 30, 2024
Robert Halley
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.**

This is a low paying field all around - not just for in-classroom teachers. Most administrators have spent many, many years inside a classroom without any kind of supplement program. Administrators are also very likely to have a degree, having devoted a decent amount of time to the field. Excluding directors, assistant directors, education coordinators, etc., feels like an insult to those who have worked hard to build up their career. Especially since those individuals have worked (and in many cases, continue to work) in classrooms during low-staffing situations. I think the Wage\$ Supplement Program is both a reward and an incentive for early childhood educators. A reward for the hard work that people with qualifications have put in, and an incentive for all of them to strive for more. Any and all funding that goes to teachers is extremely important. The fact that a lead teacher with a bachelor's degree can qualify for Medicaid based on how little they make is insane.

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,

Robert Halley