

April 30, 2024
Whitney Holl
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 Whitney Holl, and I am a preschool teacher. I am advocating for the Early Educator Compensation Stabilization Act.

I have worked in the ECE for over 15 years in a variety of different roles, including home daycare provider, teacher assistant, and lead teacher. One of the biggest problems that I see in my field is the high amount of turnover. It is so difficult to attract educated, reliable, qualified ECE workers and to keep them. This high turnover rate is bad for the children in our care – children who need consistency and to know that their teachers are going to continue to be at school for them to nurture and care for them. As ECE workers, we are constantly told how important our work is, how crucial it is to provide a high-quality learning environment for our young learners, and how what we do on a daily basis will influence the development of the children in our care. However, it is very discouraging to drive by fast food and gas station “Hiring” signs that advertise a wage higher than what I earn at my child care center. How can my work be so important, yet the pay does not reflect this at all?

The Step Up to WAGE\$ Supplement has made a huge impact on my and my family's lives. These wage supplements make it possible to earn a more competitive wage, which is extremely important for the financial wellbeing of my family. Several of the individuals I work with are paycheck to paycheck families. Without this WAGE\$ Supplement, they fall short every single month. Maybe it's only a small amount, or maybe it was a month that they got hit with \$300+ of medical bills, but there are only so many weeks and months that can go by in the negative before a change has to be made. In this case, that change would mean leaving not only the child care center, children, and coworkers that we love, but also the ECE field entirely – which is the exact type of thing that the WAGE\$ Supplement is trying to help prevent.

The WAGE\$ Supplement is a crucial program for all early childhood educators. Please vote to continue this program.

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,

Whitney Holl