

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Chelsea Roy, and I am a Teacher at Sunshine Early Child Care Center.

I have been working at Sunshine since 2008. I went to school and got my associate's degree in this field because it's something I LOVE to do. Unfortunately, I don't do this job because of the money. I am very educated and have learned so much at this center. I run a successful Preschool Classroom all by myself with 9 children. I work hard to keep my classroom the way it runs and have many happy parents who have kept in touch over the years to keep me involved in their children's lives.

Sadly, even though I love what I do with the grants and extra funding, I might need to change career paths to be able to support my own family. Big corporate companies are starting to pay more than \$20 an hour. I get paid less than that for a challenging yet rewarding job. No, I am not a babysitter; I am an early childhood educator who knows developmentally appropriate milestones, fights for children with developmental delays to get an IEP and attend the school department, and keeps a fun learning environment. I could go on and on about the importance of my job. I have filled out multiple surveys to advocate for early childhood educators. Yet nothing ever gets done, so it's very infuriating, instead of spending millions of dollars on changing a newly developed program from Exceed to Workforce. I think the money should have been given to the people who work with the children daily.

The WAGE\$ money did help me by allowing me to pay my bills on time and not have bills double up. The cost of living and food prices are outrageous now with inflation. Even when buying store-brand items or shopping just for sales, spending less than \$100 at the grocery store is impossible. I have stayed in this field for the last few months solely because I got the extra advantages, and I love what I do. The day came when I could work mother hours and get paid more money working at a corporate company. The state of RI knows how many early childhood educators are underpaid with their degrees since we must submit that information yearly for licensing purposes. So, I don't understand how shocking it was when so many people applied. I have filled out Step Up to WAGE\$ surveys and signed up for Zoom meetings to advocate for Early Childhood Educators, yet I don't seem to be getting anywhere. You say you want us to advocate, but is anyone reading these responses?

I would like you to ask policymakers and funders if they have ever entered an Early Childhood Center. I would like to know if they know what it's like to be a teacher in this field.

Rhode Island. Our children are one of the most essential things in our lives, but are we willing to have somebody come and take care of them for minimum wage? We need educated staff to stay in the field! People with degrees of all types attend training and are educated in the field. This is NOT a minimum-wage job. Anyone with a degree in this field should make over \$20 an hour with a consistent yearly review.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Chelsea Roy

Teacher

Sunshine Early Child Care Center

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Jennifer Rathbun, and I am the Director at Joyful Noise, Inc.

I am the director of Joyful Noise and an advocate for early childhood education for students, families, and staff members. These WAGE\$ supplements help staff retention because childhood care has tripled for us since the pandemic, and the unique needs of students have also been very demanding. It is a lot of work that the entire entity does for students and families, and they deserve righteous pay for all that they do. It is not a glorified babysitting occupation anymore; it is an early learning setting. Our staff work diligently to create a curriculum and pass it along to their staff, students, and families, alongside attending school, to better their education and care for their families and households. It is a lot for very little compensation. And yet, if it weren't for childcare providers, the foundation of the workforce, then there would not be workers in the fields doing their jobs. We are the foundation of the workforce and the educators of the next generation, laying the foundations for these students to begin their educational careers as early as toddlers! These benefits are needed because they show appreciation for a thankless job.

I am very grateful for the supplements I have received because I have trouble making ends meet even as the director of a childcare facility. I stumbled into this profession and excelled at it! I love my job so much that I completed my associate's as an adult and will complete my BA in my 50s! I have gone through the most challenging three years of my life. For the past three years, I had a very painful divorce after nearly 23 years, a very extensive surgery, and then a very painful injury. My life has been impacted significantly. I still hold it together as the director, managing 200 families and 30 staff members. But this left me with having to pay the mortgage, utilities, and everything else regarding a household, vehicles, insurance, bills, and groceries- all by myself. For me to keep my home, these incentives have come in handy! It makes my staff and I feel worthy of all we do in this human service field. I appreciate having the extra money, especially to help me with living expenses today.

I am a massive advocate for ECE, and I can see firsthand how important our occupation is to our students and families. I also see how hard my staff work to care for the students and administer developmental skills that students need to lay the foundations for their educational and developmental futures.

Jennifer Rathbun

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Zangya Roberts, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Beautiful Beginnings Child Care.

I know I am destined to be a teacher to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children of different backgrounds feel like they belong and are part of a loving community. They can learn, make mistakes, and be challenged to learn and explore their abilities.

Thanks to WAGE\$, I could continue to work in the field I know I am passionate about. Without this program, I would have to switch to a different field that pays a living wage. I often see job postings in different fields that require less educational requirements at a higher rate than positions in early childhood. Thanks to WAGE\$, I could supply my own laptop and book for school without sacrificing money from my one-income household.

Like many other teachers, I put in much effort and dedication to be the best I can be. Supporting financial programs that make a difference and reflect how valuable teachers are in the community is worth investing in. It helps the teacher stay in the field for an extended period, serving where it is most needed.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Zangya Roberts

Teacher's Assistant

Beautiful Beginnings Child Care

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Kirstey Randall, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at KinderArt.

I have been an educator for over ten years now. It's been an honor for me to teach young children and watch them develop the skill sets they will need to survive the rest of their lives. It's scientifically proven that children learn the most from birth to 5 years old. The fact that early childhood education is so underfunded and poorly managed by our state is heartbreaking. These kids deserve better!!!!

I'm a part-time student at URI and work part-time at my center. This economy is horrendous, and my socioeconomic status as a respected educator is laughable. I'm 30 years old and still live with my parents because I cannot afford to move out, even as a full-time employee. Educators deserve a livable wage! These WAGE\$ supplements only help a small fraction, and if you eliminate them, people will leave the early education field for better-paying jobs because it's not sustainable.

Early childhood education will cease to exist without funding. Caregivers are overworked and underpaid, so we all do the bare minimum at work. These kids are behind developmentally in all age ranges because we do not have the resources or energy. We're all living in poverty. I have a coworker who is close to becoming homeless at this time in her life. Honestly, I do not plan on staying in childcare when I graduate because it's a joke.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Kirstey Randall

Teacher's Assistant

KinderArt

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Aruna Rajaratnam and I am a Teacher at Progressive Learning Center for Children.

I have been passionate about working with children from a very early age. I am a teacher in the 4-year-old classroom at Progressive. I love my job but wish teachers were paid more. Step Up To WAGE\$ has helped a lot financially. I only wish they continued it. Please continue with the Step Up to WAGE\$. This is so important to us preschool teachers and daycare workers.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Aruna Rajaratnam

Teacher

Progressive Learning Center for Children

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Renee, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Progressive Learning for Children.

Caring for children is not just a job. We provide a "second " type home for many children who spend 40-plus hours a week with us. I love what I do and my relationships with children and their families. It's a privilege to play such a big role in their little lives.. helping them emotionally, socially, academically...

As much as I love what I do, it's unfortunate that it's one of the lowest-paying fields. The turnover and, at times, the quality of employees is not great. The wage supplement money has greatly helped me be able to provide for my family. I've been a single mom, and financially, I've struggled.

I strongly feel that childcare providers should be paid more for the immense responsibility that we take on. Please continue to fund the Step Up to WAGE\$ program.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Renee

Teacher's Assistant

Progressive Learning for Children

May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Paula Rebello, and I am a Teacher at Clubhouse Kids.

I have been in childcare for around 24 years. I love my job. I'm an infant teacher most of the time. I get this little tiny baby and teach them how to roll over, crawl, stand, walk, talk, and eat in 18 months. The school I work for can hold eight infants, but it's a hard job. Please look at the rewards I have spoken about at the end. Please take a moment to look at our pay. We work hard but don't make enough money to pay our bills. I thank all of you for the past money that keeps us working in a job we love.

This year, without these supplements, I would not have been able to buy oil or wood pellets to keep my family warm. My husband became unemployed, but the two large grants paid our mortgage so we could keep our home. I was so grateful for this money. Please understand I don't make enough money to cover bills when my husband is out of work, so when I say this money saved us, it did. I was going to Project Hands Up for food. The program took so much stress off of us. I love my job, but I don't get medical insurance, so my husband has to be there to cover these things because he knows I love my job. I have gone without many things to keep my job. Please vote this program back in. It's so hard for families to afford essential items these days.

The only other thing I can think of is helping fund school grants, such as a food program or classroom supplies. One more thing would be items for playgrounds, such as ground coverings or items to play with; these things get expensive. I'm a teacher who loves each child. The way I want someone to treat my own child. Please think of what all of you would want for a child. Please keep all grants for us teachers going. We are molding the future every day.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Paula Rebello  
Teacher  
Clubhouse Kids



May 15th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

**I am in strong support of House Finance Bill H5200, the Early Educator Workforce Act.**

My name is Aruna Rajaratnam, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Progressive Learning for Children.

I have my associate's degree in early childhood education and have worked in this field for 18 years. I have a very important job of caring for precious children and molding their minds, but my money doesn't even dent the bills I have to pay. If I were my family's main breadwinner, I would have been forced to find a different field of work.

I love working with children; I want to be recognized for all our hard work and paid accordingly.

Step up to WAGE\$, and the grants helped me so much with my bills, and I want it to continue. The money childcare workers make an hour is so low. I wish there were a rule that the workers should make at least 18 dollars an hour.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.**

Aruna Rajaratnam

Teacher's Assistant

Progressive Learning for Children