

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 Emily Franceschi, and I am a Teacher at Dr. Day Care.

Since graduating from high school, I have worked with children and have known that this is what I want to do. I love making a difference in the lives of these infants and toddlers. Some of them spend 10 hours a day with us. We feed them, change them, love them, care for them, sing and read to them, and engage in enriching activities. While these sound fun and easy, they can present challenges daily. For those who haven't worked in childcare, you should know that we become their second person. They spend more time with us than they do at their own homes. We are their source of comfort and one of their first teachers. Some days, we may have children glued to our side all day if they aren't feeling well; some days, they may just not want to be at school and would rather be at home. We try our best as teachers to provide all the comforts of home for them, but that can be so hard, and some days, we may need a 5-minute break to collect ourselves when everything we try doesn't seem to work. However, how their faces light up when they see you is so rewarding; seeing them reach and accomplish their goals is so satisfying.

It takes a particular person to work with children. It is not an easy job, but it is one of the most rewarding jobs you can imagine. I would do anything for the children in my care; they feel like my own, and I immensely love and care for them. I encourage you to come to my classroom and see what a day in the life of an infant teacher is like.

These programs have provided me with so much financial relief. I live with my boyfriend, and granted, we have a cheap apartment, but I have been living paycheck to paycheck before these programs. Living paycheck to paycheck is highly stressful and takes a toll on mental health. I used to work two jobs and attend school. Working two jobs was meant to make ends meet, as I was just not bringing home enough weekly to live comfortably. I was beyond exhausted. These programs allowed me to leave my second job and put all of my focus on my schooling and my children at work. Without these programs, I would have to start looking for another job. I will, of course, remain at the daycare because it is what I love to do, but that salary alone is not enough to live in today's economy.

To keep quality and qualified teachers in childcare, we need to either be paid what our work is worth, or WAGE\$ needs to be continued. Unfortunate scenarios such as neglect happen at childcare programs because unqualified individuals work there, thinking it will be an easy paycheck. We are helping raise the future of this world. Please allow us to do so effectively by providing teachers and centers with what we need/deserve. These children deserve so much

more. Thank you.

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

Emily Franceschi

Teacher

Dr. Day 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 Heather Hinckley, and I am an Administrator at East Bay Community Action Program - Champion Childcare.

I am an early childhood educator because I have decided to dedicate myself to improving children's life experiences. I worked at Head Start for two years and have recently moved to acting as a Site Coordinator for an afterschool program. Nothing is more important to me than letting children know how to navigate whatever life brings through calm and connected practices.

When I left a dozen years in real estate to follow my passion, I took a 50% cut in my pay, and as a single parent, that stings daily. But I have decided to cut my spending to follow my heart. The wage supplements from WAGE\$ helped pay for healthier food, cultural events, and general needs for me and my family.

I hope you, too, can recognize the importance of monetarily rewarding people in this field who are actively improving the future of our nation by raising good humans.

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

Heather Hinckley

Administrator

East Bay Community Action Program - Champion Childcare

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 Sharon Hanson, and I am a Teacher and Education Coordinator at All About Kids Too Preschool.

I have worked with young children for the past 25 years. Quality child care has always been my primary interest and what I have strived for in my career. I have gone from being a teacher's aide to owning my preschool, and I am currently running my classroom while working as the educational coordinator.

Before these grants were available, I changed my life by changing careers. This was due to financial reasons only. These supplements have greatly improved my household finances and allowed me to continue doing what I love.

It is important to note that anyone can get a job in Early Childhood Education, but that doesn't necessarily mean they will provide quality care. With educated and trained professionals in this field to help guide and shape our future, it benefits all.

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

Sharon Hanson

Teacher and Education Coordinator

All About Kids Too Preschool

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 Ashley Gosselin, and I am a Director at Gloucester Childcare Center.

I have been in the Early Childhood education field for 9 years now. I currently work as a director at Gloucester Childcare Center, but I started as a teacher's aide and became the Director. I work in this field because I am passionate about working with young children and believe early childhood education is the foundation to help children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The WAGE\$ program has helped due to the inflation of basic household needs. Unfortunately, early childhood educators are underpaid, and my family barely makes ends meet. The supplements helped us cover the extra cost of living and allowed me to remain at my job.

Early childcare educators and the centers where they work are essential. Many people would be unable to work due to not having childcare for their children. We provide nurturing, safe environments for them, yet it is one of the lowest-paid fields with barely any benefits. The pilot programs help our employees stay in this field. Unfortunately, you may see many centers close due to a lack of staffing if we lose these programs.

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

Ashley Gosselin

Director

Gloucester Childcare 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 Stephen Imondi, and I am a Teacher at Dr. Daycare East Greenwich.

I'm in Early learning childhood because I love working with children and seeing them grow and succeed in my career. This helped a lot because I got extra money in my bank account to support me. Also, I was getting a little extra money to spend on daily events and living.

The WAGE\$ funds helped in ways I can explain, especially during COVID-19. I could still work at the center, which I loved and enjoyed. This will still help everyone in the future because it will help everyone who has worked in childhood, which they love to do. Also, the extra money gave them the choice to stay in the center they like instead of looking for different centers for higher pay. I just got accepted to Step up to WAGE\$; that was also a great option.

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

Stephen Imondi

Teacher

Dr. Daycare East Greenwich

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 Madeleine Gutierrez, and I am a Teacher and Education Coordinator at Creative Early Learning Center.

Being an educator is my vocation and is why I achieved my bachelor's degree in early childhood education in my country of origin. Since practicing my career, I have always felt I was in the right place. I'm 45 years old and don't see myself doing anything different.

"The pandemic hit us hard, and we have not been able to recover." "We're not making enough money," and "I don't even know if we can stay open." Those are the answers I have heard for five years every time I ask about a salary increase. Although I can verify the low numbers in the classrooms, I can't survive on 2,400 dollars a month in an economy as hurt as ours. If I hadn't had financial aid like WAGE\$, remaining in this field of work would have been impossible.

Financial aid has saved me from having an exhausting second job or definitively giving up on early childhood education because the workload and demands of our work take so much time, even during our time at home, that it becomes exhausting and not financially rewarding.

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

Madeleine Gutierrez

Teacher and Education Coordinator

Creative Early Learning 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 Emily Francesco, and I am a Teacher at Dr. Daycare.

I chose to be an early educator because the early years are crucial to learning. These children need qualified educators in their centers, so I returned to school. Seeing them reach their milestones and the pride on their face when doing so is one of the most rewarding feelings. How their faces light up in the morning when they see me is also satisfying. I have had parents tell me their children seek out their backpacks (once they're mobile and about to be toddlers) and go to the door and say "Emmy," which is what my children refer to me as at school. Making a difference in these children's lives is why I do what I do. I love this job with every ounce of my heart and cannot see myself doing anything else. I encourage you to come to my classroom and see what a day in my classroom looks like; this will prove why I love what I do and why these children deserve centers with better funding.

WAGE\$ has helped me in so many ways. Before this last year, I worked two jobs and attended school. I had to work two jobs to make ends meet because of my salary alone at the daycare. I live with my boyfriend and have a plethora of bills I need to pay every month. I was working 60 hours a week on top of my schooling. I was burning the candle at both ends. These programs allowed me to move on from that second job because they provided me with supplemental income, for which I was extremely grateful. I could focus more on my schooling and be at my best physically and mentally for my children every day at school. These programs provided me with so much peace of mind regarding my finances.

This program coming to an end means that many educators will suffer as a result. We already get paid so little for what we do. Therefore, many of us struggle financially, especially in today's society. I can speak to this from experience. These children deserve a quality education in their classrooms. Without proper pay, we have a chance to lose those quality educators. The early years are crucial in development, so these children are entitled to the best care and education possible. They are the world's future, and early educators are some of the main contributors to their learning and development. Please reconsider dismantling this program.

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

Emily Francesco

Teacher, Dr. Daycare

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 Tara Foster, and I am the Senior Vice President of Youth Development at Pawtucket YMCA. I chose to be in the early education field because I had always wanted to be a teacher, even when I was tiny. I pretended to be a teacher while my older brother was my student. I then went to college thinking I wanted to be an elementary teacher, which is my bachelor's degree. However, once I graduated, I was alone and needed health coverage, so I became a preschool teacher. Ever since that day, I have never left the early education field.

I am passionate about helping children and families start their education journey in the right direction. I have been in the field for over 25 years and have worked my way up to being the Senior VP of Youth Development for a non-profit agency. I strive always to do my best and have been fortunate to have the leaders who have taught me. This field is so crucial for all families, now more than ever. With prices rising on almost everything, families have to work, and with work comes the need for childcare for their children. Our job is valuable in so many ways. Without the childcare workforce, families may not be able to survive the economic impact of what is happening now. Preparing children to be ready for their entry into the world of education is just as important. Please understand that without qualified teachers, none of this would be possible.

The wage supplement has helped me in so many ways. It helps with basic life necessities that I may be unable to afford otherwise. I have been fortunate enough to be able to go back to school and finish my master's degree, thanks to the extra money. It helps pay for my books and other essentials needed.

Early education teachers and leaders do so much and shape all these little minds. More compensation needs to be provided for these individuals. Educators think about everyone else before thinking of themselves. We are very passionate about the work that we do every day.

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

Tara Foster

Senior Vice President of Youth Development

Pawtucket YMCA

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 Leeana Gosselin, and I am a member of the School Age Staff at AlphaBEST Education. I am enrolled as a junior at the University of Rhode Island, pursuing a degree in Elementary Education with a Middle-Level Certification in History. My choice of academic pursuit stems from a profound passion for working with children and witnessing their initial encounters with the world. Being able to serve as a reliable and nurturing figure for children, particularly those lacking such support at home, is a responsibility I hold in high regard. Recognizing the indispensable role of childcare programs in numerous families, I value their provision of secure environments wherein children can cultivate essential life skills.

Balancing my responsibilities as a student amidst a demanding schedule, compounded by a lengthy commute and the obligations of student teaching, leaves me with limited time for employment. Nonetheless, the flexibility afforded by my program enables me to pursue work opportunities while advancing my education. The invaluable grants I've been fortunate to receive have been instrumental in financing my academic journey, alleviating the financial burden that would otherwise impede my progress. With only my mother and elderly grandmother at home, I am responsible for covering all my expenses, including bills, sustenance, and tuition. Hailing from a modest background, these grants serve as a lifeline, empowering me to forge a brighter future.

Numerous childcare professionals nationwide are exiting their field due to inadequate compensation, understaffing, and insufficient backing from administrators, parents, and governmental entities. These grants and programs provide a lifeline for passionate individuals committed to their profession, enabling them to persevere amidst systemic shortcomings within the education system. While WAGE\$ represents a temporary fix for broader systemic issues, they offer educators contemplating departure an opportunity to prolong their tenure in the field, marking a positive initial stride toward addressing the underlying challenges.

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

Leeana Gosselin

School Age Staff

AlphaBEST Education

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 Kelly Ford, and I am a School Nurse at Cranston Child Development Center.

I am a registered nurse with a Bachelor's degree in science and have worked at CCAP/Cranston Child Development Center for over 3 years. I love working with this population and helping to coordinate and provide services that help children and families improve their health.

Before working in childcare, I worked in a skilled facility as a nurse. I took a substantial pay cut (\$15/hr) when I accepted this position. Though I love my job, the pay is a hardship, and there are no tuition assistance programs for school nurses (I would have been approved had I worked at our agency's health center). I have student loans, a mortgage, and a high health insurance premium. The additional wage supplements allowed me to remain in my position.

Childcare workers should be paid equal pay to other educators and school nurses, such as those in public schools. If income does not improve, many educators and nurses will leave their positions in childcare for public school positions. This will worsen the staffing crisis.

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

Kelly Ford

School Nurse

Cranston Child Development Center