

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 Murray, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at East Bay Community Action Program.

I'm 75 years old and have a bachelor's degree and many years of work experience. I'm grateful to be able to work full-time in a Pre-K program at East Bay Community Action Program. We work with children and families from many walks of life— maybe a 2 doctor family, maybe a homeless family, children in foster care, children living in severe poverty, and many children who have walked to the Texas border from Central America with their very young scared parents and who have somehow miraculously made it to Rhode Island. I see courage every day of my life through the children we support, along with miracles, unfairness, poverty, and racism. We love each child, provide a safe, structured environment for everyone, ensure they get enough to eat at school, and celebrate each unique developmental milestone these children master.

Right now, we're short-staffed in our programs, and it's been hard to keep kind, intelligent teachers even with the bonus money bestowed on us. The pay scale in early childhood education is low, and I believe it will be disastrous when the much-needed extra money is terminated.

The Step Up to WAGE\$ programs helped many of us pay bills, buy necessary things, and, most of all, not have to be afraid of how to make ends meet.

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

Jennifer Murray

Teacher's Assistant

East Bay Community Action Program

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 Sharron Needham, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Sandpipers Early Learning Center.

I have been working at Sandpipers for 8 years. I love working with preschool-aged children. Please continue these programs like WAGES, as they greatly help us financially.

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

Sharron Needham

Teacher's Assistant

Sandpipers 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 Krystal MacKenzie, and I am a Teacher at Hamlet Learning Center.

I am a single mom of 3 kids who works full-time in Rhode Island. The WAGE\$ program money helps immensely, especially with the cost of living and our low teacher wages. I wish I hadn't missed the childcare pilot, which would have benefited me and my family financially.

Please keep all the programs for teachers. We have low wages, so these programs help out a lot. The childcare program should also be relaunched.

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

Krystal MacKenzie

Teacher

Hamlet 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 Leah Montiero, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Dr. Daycare Providence.

This is my first year working here at Dr. Daycare in the early childhood care field. I am 19 years old and in my first year of college for early childhood education. I love this job because I am getting experience with preschool-age children and infants and toddlers. I get to learn the children's different personalities and see how to adapt to each to provide a helpful learning environment and help my lead teacher and other team members with whatever they may need. My goal with school and my career is to become a first-grade teacher. I have always been passionate about it, having teaching run in my family. Both my grandfathers were teachers, and growing up, I admired them.

The program has helped me so much. I am currently expecting my first child in August and am in school. As I mentioned, the program has helped me and my fiancé prepare for our little baby and not have to worry about my school expenses, as I used the \$750 to pay for some things I needed. It was a big help, and I know it will continue to help after my baby. The cost of living is not cheap, and although I love this field, the salary isn't the best. Please continue to fund the Step Up to WAGES program.

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

Leah Montiero

Teacher's Assistant

Dr. Daycare Providence

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 Krystal MacKenzie, and I am a Teacher at Hamlet Learning Center.

I am a mom of 3. I love my job, and I take pride in coming to work every day and providing an excellent learning environment

The WAGE\$ program supplements have helped my family a great deal. With inflation rising, the program gives me extra money to care for my household. As a single mother of 3, I struggle to get by with everything being so expensive. We teachers are not paid enough, so these programs help a lot. If the programs are taken away, many teachers and students will suffer. Most teachers will need a second job just to get by, and all that will do is wear teachers out, and the students will suffer.

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

Krystal MacKenzie

Teacher

Hamlet 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 Gianna Mallette, and I am a Teacher at Early Foundation Academy.

I was always lost on what I wanted to do for a career growing up. I changed majors more times than I can count; the only thing I knew for sure was I wanted to help people/make a difference in someone's life. It wasn't until I had my first child that I realized the ECE field was the path for me. I had my second child during the pandemic while still in school for ECE. Working with such young kids, helping them grow and develop skills, and working with different families can be challenging, but it's worth it when you see the smile on the child's face each morning to greet you or you hear from the families how much they love coming to school.

I have a 7-year-old and a 4-year-old. My 4-year-old attends the preschool program where I currently work. Before this program, I was receiving a childcare voucher. Still, they had implemented a weekly copayment and back pay because the offices had lost my recertification forms and tried to terminate their assistance due to not complying with recertification, which meant that there were weeks on end where I accumulated debt. I don't make a lot of money. Because of that copayment, I would've had to choose between working fewer hours, so I could keep my kids home the weeks that I had other big bills due, not paying my electric or rent bill on time, or not working at all, staying home with the kids, and having to apply for even more state assistance like Snap/cash assistance.

Being able to work has made it possible for me to get off of RIW and Snap. I was very proud to be able to do that, but seeing that childcare alone is expensive. Childcare jobs are highly underpaid and demanding with hours; without the Step Up to WAGE\$ program, I would unfortunately not be able to get by.

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

Gianna Mallette

Teacher

Early Foundation Academy

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 Bailee Alyza Malama-Gomez, and I am an Administrator at Montessori Community School of Rhode Island.

I work the job I do, and in the positions I am in (which is currently both the Administrative Operations Coordinator and Interim Lead Toddler Teaching Support with a Roots & Wings After School Program Coordinating at a non-traditional, non-white-supremacy, anti-bias, and anti-racist, financially accessible, super equitable and progressive early childhood education space right in my home of the southwest-ish end of PVD) ultimately with the hopes of being a minuscule part of the change I believe the world around me needs. Children are being massacred, judged, starved, beaten to death, forgotten, left, lost, abused, neglected— all sorts of unthinkable tragedies (never mind little kiddos of color most specifically); the very simultaneous moment I am typing this and my heart alone doesn't allow to me sleep at night if I (as an adult, one with white privilege, as an educated and mostly physically capable yet a fellow human being to these extraordinary little people) am not trying to be apart of the change they at the least deserve. This work has not at all, never been, nor will ever be about money, wages, or anything remotely capitalistic, BUT with all of society's endless other pressures, injustices, and mess ups that unfortunately result in the hardest of workers to remain too the most underpaid— it is simply because of programs like WAGE\$ that I have remained afloat, so gratefully chipped away at my student debt, and can see someday holding hope for a way out.

Thank you, but let's keep up the fight for a place that will be happier when we leave it than when we first joined.

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

Bailee Alyza Malama-Gomez

Administrator

Montessori Community School of Rhode Island

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 Cheryl Mello, and I am a Teacher at the Head Start Chaffee Site EBCAP.

I have worked with toddlers for 48 years. I do not consider this a "job" but a career I cherish and enjoy. I thrive on working with young children and seeing the progress I helped obtain! I continue working in this field to offer the best positive learning environment and experience. I appreciate all the programs that provided a bit of financial help.

I work hard and have two jobs, so the WAGE\$ program has helped a lot and allowed me to catch up on life responsibilities and purchase materials and supplies for my classroom. I hope that these programs continue.

I work hard to help my children thrive in a diverse society, and it's my goal and challenge to keep giving all I can to all children in the classroom. I devote my career and time to working 40 hours a day to accommodate each other to learn and develop at their individual level. Our current pay is problematic. It's tough to make it. As mentioned, I work two jobs, but I'll never give up on working in my career; it's my passion.

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

Cheryl Mello

Teacher

Head Start Chaffee Site EBCAP

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 Nayely Meson, and I am proud to be a PreK teacher assistant at the Over the Rainbow Learning Center. In addition to my teaching role, I am pursuing my associate's degree through the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), with plans to graduate in May 2025. I am dedicated to furthering my education and professional development, so I am excited to transfer to the University of Rhode Island (URI) afterward to complete my bachelor's degree in early childhood education. I aim to enhance my teaching skills and knowledge to serve my students better and contribute to their growth and learning in a nurturing environment.

WAGE\$ was crucial in strengthening my financial security during particularly challenging moments when I most required support. They provided me with immediate relief and helped me build a more stable foundation for my future. The assistance I received allowed me to navigate through unexpected expenses and maintain my essential commitments.

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

Nayley Meson

PreK Teacher Assistant

Over the Rainbow 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.

I am Virginia Najarro, a Family Child Care Provider at Virginia Family Child Care. I want to help children in their early years, and high-quality education at an early age is vital to have fewer students and successful professionals. Knowing that each of the children I serve has different needs has been the driving force that has motivated me to strive to continue improving each year and offer high-quality care. Although there are other challenges to achieving these objectives, during the pandemic, we have had an unfavorable factor since we have suffered as Suppliers due to a lack of resources and lack of personnel who want to work in this industry and with the high prices of our educational materials and food, which is why the WAGE\$ programs have been vital for our program to continue working. I am very grateful to all the children I serve and my assistant and I for providing us with this valuable help.

Mi nombre es Virginia Najarro y soy proveedora de cuidado infantil familiar en Virginia Family Child Care. Mi deseo de ayudar a los niños en sus primeros años, sabiendo que la educación de alta calidad a temprana edad es muy importante para tener menos estudiantes y profesionales exitosos. El saber que cada uno de los niños a quienes sirvo tiene diferentes necesidades ha sido el motor que ha motivado a esforzarse para seguir mejorando cada año y ofrecer un cuidado de alta calidad. A pesar que para lograr estos objetivos hay diferentes desafíos, Durante la pandemia hemos tenido un factor desfavorable ya que hemos sufrido como Proveedores por falta de recursos y falta de personal que desee trabajar en esta industria y con los precios altos en nuestro materiales de educación y comida, por eso los programas de WAGE\$ ha sido vital para que nuestro programa continúe trabajando. Y agradezco en gran manera en nombre de todos los niños a los que sirvo y a mi asistente y a mí que nos suministren estas valiosas ayudas.

Quiero agradecerle por tomarse el tiempo de leer mi testimonio. **POR FAVOR APRUEBE ESTA LEY.**

Virginia Najarro

Family Child Care Provider