

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 Kristin Segee, and I am a Teacher at Lollipop Learning Center LLC.

I love working with children. The early childhood field is all I have ever wanted to be in. Seeing my students every day is incredibly exciting.

The Step Up to Wage\$ program has been helping me keep up with bill paying and paying off some bills I've had over the years. It has also helped me with emergencies - when things come up, I know I have some money saved.

Please keep it going, but re-look at it and change who and how much everyone gets. Because for myself, I work full-time Monday through Friday, but some people only work one day a week and for maybe 5 hours.

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

Kristin Segee

Teacher

Lollipop Learning Center LLC

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 Carmen Soares, and I am a Teacher at Mount Hope Childcare Center.

I've been in the early childhood field for over 35 years. During my time in this field, I've seen staff come and go, watched directors struggle to allow planning time for teachers to plan accordingly, and felt disrespected throughout my time. Our buildings are so short-staffed, and we're underpaid. I spend a lot of money from my pocket to keep great activities consistent and keep my students engaged and interested in the curriculum daily. I spend more money in my class weekly and am not reimbursed. I invest in my class and my students to have excellent outcomes, which I do because this is what I love doing.

The Step Up to WAGE\$ Program has been such an asset because the extra money made me feel like I wasn't putting a dent in my pocket every time I purchased an item for my classroom.

It would be a great deal and an asset to allow this program to continue because we are molding minds, and our positions are just as important as the teachers working in the school department because we are doing the prep work for those teachers. We do not get compensation or notoriety for our efforts and hard work.

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

Carmen Soares

Teacher

Mount Hope 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 Amy Sherman, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Charlestown Early Learning Center.

I am a married mother of a teenage daughter living in Providence, RI. The COVID-19 pandemic ended my retail management career, and I was offered the chance to be a teaching assistant at a program close to my family's heart. I love the fulfilling experience of working with preschool children every day and am currently taking classes to continue my early childhood education.

There is no way I could take continuing education classes toward an early childhood degree or work at my childcare center without additional financial help. My husband is a retail manager, and we rely on two incomes to survive. Without the assistance of programs like WAGE\$, I would have had to return to a full-time retail job that was very stressful instead of pursuing a career change that I love.

I would like people to know I also have a second part-time job with a local organization where I work as part of the building and grounds team. At this job, I make more money per hour just emptying trash bins and doing menial labor than I do in teaching children every day. It is criminal how underpaid educators are, especially in early childhood programs, and it is not the center's fault...I am being paid comparable to other educators. It is still not enough.

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

Amy Sherman

Teacher's Assistant

Charlestown 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 Gina Slattery, and I am a Teacher at Breezy Knoll Child Care Center.

I started in this profession right after college. I have stayed for over 30 years. The people I work for are wonderful to the families to whom we provide a service.

Although I love my job and can't imagine doing anything else, I have reached a cap on how much I earn. I may or may not get a Christmas bonus. It depends on the year that the center has had. My job does not take into consideration the rising prices of everyday life. Most government help is for younger people so that centers can retain them. There is little to help the people who have spent their lives in this profession. For that reason, I am thankful for the salary supplements and WAGES.

We hear so much talk about how important early childhood is, yet we have seen no changes in how we get paid. I have been in this profession for over 30 years and have not seen any change. Luckily, I am married and have a dual-income family. But we still struggle with rising prices and student loans for our children. I can't even imagine living this life as a single parent.

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

Gina Slattery

Teacher

Breezy Knoll 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 Lisa Sorel, and I am a Teacher at Dr. Daycare Smithfield.

From early on, I knew I wanted to work with kids. My personal life came first, and I began as a mom in my early twenties. I was fortunate that I was able to stay home and raise my children before using my schooling. When my girls entered preschool, I witnessed how they grew leaps and bounds socially and educationally; I decided when my girls entered school full-time, I would work with the state's youngest learners to help them achieve what I was witnessing in my girls firsthand.

WAGE\$ supplemented my low wages to allow me to continue doing what I love while providing for my family and giving them a quality life.

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

Lisa Sorel

Teacher

Dr. Daycare Smithfield

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 Sol Segarra, and I am a Teacher at Metcalf Love4All.

I love working with the children, especially watching them learn and grow. Teaching children developmental skills to help them expand their knowledge and achieve their milestones is an honor.

Where I work, the Director has helped me work towards my CDA and Learners program. Being able to take these classes has helped me learn so much, from creating a welcoming, safe, loving, and print-rich classroom to learning how to teach each child individually by keeping in mind that all children have their own unique learning styles.

The money I have received from the WAGES program has helped me buy materials for the classroom and pay bills with the cost of living that we are living now.

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

Sol Segarra

Teacher

Metcalf Love4All

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 Erica Schiappa, and I am a Family Advocate at Tri-County Community Action Agency Head Start.

I work in the Early Childcare field but am not an educator. I have the privilege of being a Family Advocate or Social Worker for the families enrolled in the Head Start Program. I have been working for the same agency for over 19 years. I stay here because I love the work I do. I complete home visits to all my clients enrolled, no matter their living situation. I build meaningful and trusting relationships with them. Together, we set goals to improve their family well-being, their ability to advocate for themselves, and their knowledge of resources in their community. Not just anybody would do or could do my job, but I have chosen to do it for almost 2 decades. I have previously worked second jobs that allowed me to afford to work in this field. My family has made sacrifices to allow me to stay at a job I am so incredibly great at. The low hourly wage I receive is shameful compared to those working in other fields that do not carry the burden of the stress other families endure.

I am a Family Advocate/Case Manager for a Head Start Program. I have a family of 4. My husband has been a teacher for over 20 years and makes a relatively low salary. Due to the low wages in my field, we struggle and live paycheck to paycheck. With the rising costs in the supermarket, electricity, and everything, I often try to skip going to the market or cannot buy certain foods, such as fruits my family enjoys. Every WAGE\$ bonus received does not give me the freedom to purchase new items or spend on anything luxurious; instead, it pays credit card debt accumulated from the basic needs of the grocery store. My children are in extracurricular sports, but maintaining them is a struggle. Without these wage supplements, I would stress how to cut even more from our budget daily. I work just as hard as a Social Worker in a public school, and I get paid a fraction of the amount. I deserve a fair, livable wage comparable to those in the public school district. I am constantly looking for new employment, but I love what I do and build exceptional relationships with the families I work with. These relationships help me to help them in countless ways. Helping a family get on SNAP, medical, WIC, and a job ultimately helps our community.

The WAGE\$ supplements are not enough to cover the change in the cost of living, but they help. I cannot even imagine the coming years without the additional funds.

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

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 Kristin Silva, and I am a Teacher at the Academy for Little Children - Lincoln.

I have worked in the same school for 5 years, and words can't explain how important this job is. I worked hard to get where I am and couldn't be any prouder. I just watch the children grow and learn, and I enjoy knowing it is because I was their teacher and there to guide them in the right direction.

Having this extra income has made me feel much more appreciative, and yes, money isn't everything, but we teachers don't make enough money when it comes to our pay rate. We do so much, from creating our own curriculum and implementing the activities into our day with the kids, all while helping children who may have behavioral issues. I have always wanted to be a teacher, and now that I have the opportunity to further my career, having that extra help through WAGES has also helped me stay at my job so I can pay my bills.

I understand that money doesn't grow on trees, but we, as teachers, deserve it so much. We work on little to no paid time off; we have no benefits, so we must pay for medical insurance. And the time off includes sick time, so technically, it isn't vacation time. It's more like, "Let's hope that we don't sick so we can take that much-needed time off for ourselves." We also don't get paid enough. It's so hard to live off of just the barely anything paycheck. Someone working in a fast food restaurant may make \$20 an hour, but I am making \$16 an hour as a teacher. I am not downing anyone who works in fast food, but I am just trying to prove that we do as much or more.

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

Kristin Silva

Teacher

The Academy for Little Children - Lincoln

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 Alishia Salerno, and I am a Teacher at Sunshine Child Development Center.

Ever since high school, I have wanted to work with children. I have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. I have worked in many capacities in the early childhood field. I want to advocate for others to be recognized and paid as professionals. I've worked with children for nearly 25 years and advocate for them in many ways. Unfortunately, I do not get paid enough to live in this profession. I am advocating for more pay in this profession, regardless of working for a profit organization. I work an 8-hour day, educating young children and nurturing their social and emotional skills. I am a part of the children's lives and work closely with their families to help their children navigate the world around them. The families depend on me and my colleagues to help their children learn and grow.

Early childhood educators are not looked upon as professionals like public school teachers are. We, too, need degrees and continuing education, which we do on our own time. Therefore, we are not in a union and find it challenging to advocate for our financial stability. WAGE\$ has helped recruit and retain staff.

The money I received has helped me tremendously. My hourly wage is insufficient to meet my living expenses as inflation increases. This helped me continue to perform this significant work. I don't always receive an annual increase, which is not due to my job performance.

I would like you to advocate for higher pay for Early Childhood Educators. I have a bachelor's degree and cannot live on what I make annually. I work full-time and am passionate about my job and my children. The state should find more money to allocate to Early Childhood educators. The Step Up to WAGE\$ program was helpful, and I don't think it should end. I will be financially stressed without this program. I've been employed at the same childcare for over 10 years now. For me to get a raise, my director has to increase tuition for families. As tuition increases, I see some families needing to leave because they can no longer afford it. I feel this is a trickle-down effect, and eventually, teachers start to leave the profession and center to find higher-paying jobs; therefore, we are in a staffing crisis. This staffing crisis has led to hiring persons with less formal education and training. The education level of children is decreasing due to this staffing crisis.

Retaining quality early childhood educators increases the long-established benefits for the children's educational success. Having a high turnover of quality educators decreases the child's educational outcome.

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 Katherine St. Germain, and I am a Teacher at Johnston Child Care Center.

For over 30 years, my mother served in all facets of childcare, from teacher to curriculum development to director. I wanted no part of that career path, so I opted to work in retail instead. Growing up and having my own children, I became more invested in early childhood education. I decided to try my hand at being a preschool teacher. It was a much more rewarding career choice, and I am proud to impact future generations.

I have been lucky enough to receive wage supplements. Let me say the funds have come in handy every time! From car repairs to my son needing braces to Christmas gifts, the extra money has been a lifesaver for my family! I would seriously consider another career path if the programs are not offered. I know funding is limited, but I feel like child care is an area that the state should value enough to spend more money on. Children need a strong academic and social support foundation to thrive in schools, and we've seen a decline in school attendance, test scores, etc. As someone who cares deeply about children, I find it very sad to see that.

As I stated, I used to work in retail. I took a pay cut to join the childcare field, but I thought it was a more impactful choice. I didn't want to look back and see that my contribution to my community was just selling 'stuff.' I have so much joy knowing that I am making a difference in the lives of my students and paving a path to their academic success. Lately, however, it has been harder to make ends meet, and I fear returning to the retail field for more money. Childcare is a wildly undervalued and underpaid profession. It's very disheartening that a kid fresh out of high school walking into a Walmart for their first job could make more than a teacher who creates lesson plans, age-appropriate crafts, conferences with parents, is required to take professional development courses, buys supplies out of pocket, and takes their work home with them nightly would be on the same pay scale. I would like the policymakers to know that you get what you pay for, and if we'd like to retain capable, caring, and invested teachers in the state, we should pay them more. The future of education starts young, and we need to invest in children from the start.

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

Katherine St. Germain

Teacher