

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 Kendra Johnson, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Lollipop Learning Center.

I am an early childhood educator because it is literally what I was meant to do. It's the only job I have felt so proud to be a part of; it gives my life purpose and meaning, and I genuinely think of it as doing what I want to do for a living! I love providing a safe environment for my kiddos daily and helping them learn and grow!

While I love this job, it is criminally underpaid. This year, I lost my Medicaid because I made just above the cut-off line. Not enough to survive, but also low enough wages to get assistance. I fall between the cracks and have rent, a car payment, insurance, and a phone bill; by the time all of that is paid for, all my money is gone. These payments have helped me eat and stay afloat doing what I love to do. I don't want to leave teaching but can't make it work without supplemental income.

Please help us. Every person I've ever worked with in the early childhood education field wants to do it and loves the children they serve daily, but ultimately can't stay because they can't afford the necessities. Many women I work with have a second job to pay their bills. This shouldn't be the way. An investment in us is an investment in your children and your future!

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

Kendra Johnson

Teacher's Assistant

Lollipop 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 Adys Laboy, and I am a Family Child Care Provider at Adys Family Day Care. I want to keep my home and keep my employees with me. I need to continue supporting the families in our community.

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

Mi nombre es Adys Laboy y soy proveedora de cuidado infantil familiar en Adys Family Day Care. A no perder mi hogar y mantener a mis empleados conmigo. Que necesitates seguir apoyando a las familias de nuestra comunidad.

Quiero agradecerles por tomarse el tiempo de leer mi testimonio. **¡POR FAVOR, APRUEBEN ESTE PROYECTO DE LEY!**

Adys Laboy
Family Child Care Provider
Adys Family 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 Ana Jimenez, and I am a Floater, but I also work in admissions at the Bishop McVinney School.

I love helping families who don't know English with the admissions, enrollment, and financial aid process. It makes me feel needed, and that is something that feeds the soul.

I am a single mom, and these supplements helped me stay at the job I am at and helped me catch up on my bills. It made me not stress as much knowing the WAGE\$ money was coming (thank God) and being a happier mom. They also made me a better worker and let me continue at my job and not find another one.

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

Ana Jimenez

Floater and Admissions Staff

The Bishop McVinney School

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 Diana Low, and I am a Teacher at Progressive Learning for Children.

I am passionate about young children and have worked in the early childhood field for 24 years now. I have a bachelor's degree but I enjoy working with toddlers. I can stay in this job with the help of programs like WAGE\$. I can make more money in the school system, but happiness is more important, and shaping the lives of young children is all I know!

I am a full-time childcare educator supporting two children on top of everyday expenses. I started to look for another job, but then the WAGE\$ program came along and compensated for my low pay. These programs keep me afloat in the field I love.

Early childhood is one of the most important fields, but what we do is not acknowledged. We are responsible for the health and well-being of infants to 5 years old. Our pay does not reflect what we do as educators.

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

Diana Low

Teacher

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 Josie Isabella, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Tri-County Community Action Program.

I enjoy working with children! I find pride and joy in my position. The pay rate as a TA certainly doesn't pay my bills, but I love coming to work daily. If you enjoy your position, money is not everything, but knowing we have such programs to help us financially is an honor, and I would recommend such positions to work with children.

Step Up to WAGE\$ helped me stay in this position because it would help my family supplement my income. Please continue to assist us and continue these programs.

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

Josie Isabella

Teacher's Assistant

Tri-County 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 Karen Kuski, and I am an Administrator at Children's Learning Express.

I have been in the field of early childhood for over 25 years. I have been at my present job for 19 years. In the past, I have gone without healthcare because I could not afford it on my salary, working in early education. With the help of the TEACH program, I returned to school and earned my bachelor's degree in 2018 at 67. My degree is in teaching pre-K through grade 2. I could quickly go into the public school system. Teachers are in demand. Doing so would also afford me the benefits of teaching in the public system. However, despite this, I have chosen to stay in the ECE field.

I am very invested in this age group, infants and toddlers, and with my current center. I enjoy working with this age group. I am passionate about watching children grow, develop, and become independent. I love watching the children discover the world around them.

The Wage\$ supplement was a massive help to me. Early childcare centers were deemed essential during the pandemic; therefore, early educators were not part of the population receiving extra unemployment benefits. My car was beginning to give me some problems. The money helped with a down payment. The money was also used to help me get caught up on my utility bills.

Additionally, I was able to start a savings account. At Christmas time, I donated to my neighborhood's little free library. This helped to purchase books that were used as Christmas gifts for children in the area. I was also able to buy some new things for my center.

The cost of living has increased. Food, utilities, interest paid, health care, and rent are sky-high. Most early childcare workers make minimum wage or just above. These funds helped my family and other families immensely. I do not qualify for any state assistance because my children are grown. Enrollment is low, and the owner cannot afford to pay raises. I could go to McDonald's and make a higher hourly wage.

We have these little lives in our hands each day. It is a huge responsibility. I am not looking to get rich quickly; however, I would like to be able to pay my bills and be financially comfortable.

I want to thank you for reading my testimony. **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!**

Karen Kuski

Administrator, Children's Learning Express

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 Diane Kingston, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at WHSCDA Inc.

The money is very helpful for me to stay in my current education job. We are a low-income agency with lower pay than other teaching jobs. The extra money from WAGE\$ helps me with the cost of living expenses. Please continue these programs - they mean everything to us.

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

Diane Kingston

Teacher's Assistant

WHSCDA Inc.

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 Kendra, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Lollipop Learning Center.

I am an early childhood educator because I am meant to do this. Working with children 4-5 is my passion, and I love it. I am going to college to get a degree in ECE and further my education in this field. Unfortunately, because I am in early childhood education, I'm not part of any type of union that can advocate for fair pay and benefits. I pay for my own health insurance out of pocket, and it's just too much. The cost of living is insane, and this job simply does not support me. It's heartbreaking.

This has been my safety net. I do not have any leftover income after bills to save for emergencies like being short on rent/car issues, health issues, etc. This has been my saving grace to put something away for an emergency.

Please, please, please help early childhood educators and continue to fund the WAGE\$ program. We love our job, or we wouldn't do it! We just want to be able to live.

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

Kendra

Teacher's Assistant

Lollipop 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 Beth Lilligreen, and I am a Teacher at Cadence Academy Preschool.

Everyone knows a child grows the most mentally from birth to age five. So why are we not investing in those educators with better salaries? I am a teacher in the Early Childhood Education field who struggles to stay in the field because of the wages that we make. I have my BA and a CDA certificate, and I barely make it by. I have a son who is in Preschool, and if I weren't given an employee discount for him to attend, I would not be able to afford to stay in this field. The cost of daycare is too high. It doesn't even amount to the wages of the teachers. We work hard to educate and create an atmosphere that makes other people's children feel comfortable at school. We are drained, exhausted, and burned out. We take money from our pockets to create a relaxed and educated classroom. I was a part of two programs that helped supplement pay for my wages. I would have left the field months ago without these programs. It has helped me stay afloat financially tremendously. I hope the government sees that increasing early education wages is extremely important.

These programs helped me provide for my family. This money put food on the table and allowed us to stay in the home we currently live in.

Increase early educators' wages, or there will be fewer qualified people teaching your children.

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

Beth Lilligreen

Teacher

Cadence Academy Preschool