

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 Maribel Carrasco and I am Teacher at Beautiful Beginnings Childcare Center.

As an early childhood educator, I am deeply committed to fostering the growth and development of young children during their most critical formative years. I believe that early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and success. In my role, I work to create a nurturing, inclusive environment where children are encouraged to explore, ask questions, and develop both cognitively and socially. I see my work as an investment in the future, as I have the privilege of shaping the next generation of thinkers, creators, and leaders. As an educator, I can teach, inspire, and empower children, ensuring they have the tools to thrive. I am passionate about supporting families, advocating for quality education, and ensuring that all children, regardless of background, deserve opportunities.

The WAGE\$ program has financially supported me and my family, allowing me to continue my work as an early childhood educator without the constant worry of financial strain. The assistance provided has helped cover essential living expenses, including childcare for my own children, enabling me to remain in my job and fully dedicate myself to my role. With the support of these programs, I've maintained stability in my household while staying focused on the important work I do with children. Additionally, the financial relief has helped bridge the gap between my wages and the cost of living, allowing me to stay in the field I am passionate about while ensuring my family's well-being. These programs have enabled me to continue contributing to the vital field of early childhood education.

As an early childhood educator, I am dedicated to my children and the broader community. I believe in the power of early education to transform lives, and I am deeply committed to creating an environment where every child feels seen, heard, and valued. However, it's important to note that our challenges as educators, including low wages and limited resources, significantly impact our ability to provide the best care and education. The financial support and resources provided to programs like mine make a world of difference, but there is still much work to be done to ensure that early childhood educators are properly compensated for the vital work we do.

I encourage policymakers and funders to recognize the immense value of early childhood education, not just in terms of academic outcomes but in terms of societal benefits. When we invest in early childhood education, we invest in the future—strengthening families, improving communities, and ensuring that all children can thrive. I hope my story can shed light on the real-world impact of these programs and the importance of continued investment in the field.

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

Maribel Carrasco

Teacher

Beautiful Beginnings 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 Nourhan Ali and I am a Teacher at CCAP Child Development Center.

I'm an early childhood teacher working with children between 3 and 5. I'm passionate about what I do — shaping little minds, teaching them with love and patience, and being there for them in their most important years. But let me be honest... passion alone doesn't pay the bills.

This work is beautiful, but it's also exhausting, physically and emotionally. The WAGE\$ Program gave me something that most early educators rarely get: recognition. It made me feel seen. That extra financial support wasn't just money — it was motivation. It helped me feel valued, respected, and able to keep going in a field that often feels invisible.

Without this program, I don't know how long I can stay. Like many others, I love my students, but love doesn't cover rent, groceries, or gas. We're losing amazing teachers daily because they simply can't afford to stay.

If WAGE\$ ends, it's not just teachers who suffer— it's the children, the families, and the whole system. More classrooms will close. Waitlists will grow longer. Quality of care will drop. And the ones who will feel it the most are the ones who matter most: the kids.

Please keep this program going. We're not asking for luxury — we're asking to survive while doing the most important job in the world.

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

Nourhan Ali

Teacher

CCAP Child Development 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 Geraldine Belanger and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Children's Workshop.

I am an early child educator. As a retired 4th-grade teacher, I missed working with kids, and that's how I ended up at TCW. Honestly, the pay is awful. The hours are tough because there are always staffing or tardy issues. Ironically, I LOVE my job! Never mind the adults....the kids are so special. They teach me a thing or two. I feel so honored to be a part of these toddlers' lives. Our future!

Being retired has its financial challenges. Although I do get a small-ish pension (I didn't make the age/years of service algorithm), the money I received for the Step Up to WAGE\$ bonus helped me and my husband pay our heating bills for a few winters, pay for a huge car repair back in 2023, and pay our rent increase (twice)!

Many of our lawmakers and policy writers have no idea what a daycare or early childhood (or elementary) working day looks like. Every day is stressful. There's an issue every day, and I'm NOT talking about the kids (another issue altogether). The teachers I've worked with (a good majority) are superior. They are professionals. They have such patience and love for their students. But they also clean their rooms (janitor stuff), sanitize them, and do their own classroom laundry, among other things. They rarely get to go home on time. There's more. I just think they need so much more support and more money.

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

Geraldine Belanger

Teacher's Assistance

The Children's Workshop

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 Catherine and I am a Teacher at Candy Cane Preschool.

This has changed the game majorly in the ECE field. I am so blessed to have received just the lowest tier of the WAGE\$ program. It is well thought out and structured. Every dollar counts, and receiving funds for this in the past helped me pay off student payments.

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

Catherine

Teacher

Candy Cane Preschool

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 a Teacher at a child care program in the state of Rhode Island.

I've been an early childhood teacher for over 11 years. I am dedicated to loving and caring for each child I care for, and I enjoy forming connections with them and their families. I strive always to help children build skills and assist them in overcoming any challenges they may face. I am also very passionate about sharing my love of animals and the natural world whenever I can.

As a mom and educator, it's been challenging to remain in the field of early childhood education. I want to help my family build a better future, but it's difficult financially to continue to see other career paths pay more. As a teacher, I miss out on possible extra money for my family and children. Bank tellers, fast food workers, and even janitors make more per hour than the typical early childhood educator. This program has taken some of the burden off of us financially and allowed me to enjoy life more.

My job makes working parents feel safe and secure, leaving their little ones in someone else's care. Seeing myself and my coworkers put in so much time, love, and dedication into our fantastic school, but then struggle financially, is heartbreaking. I know some of the lovely teachers I work with struggle financially. Seeing them worrying about bills piling up, food insecurity, and just the financial stress that plagues the field of education is highly discouraging. Teachers and their spouses constantly work multiple jobs, have various side hustles, and go to the food pantry, but this is not how we should live.

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

Anonymous Teacher

Child Care 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 Niurkys Arias, and I am a Teacher at the Children's Workshop.

I have always loved children, so I decided to go to school for early childhood education to become a teacher and care for and nurture younger kids. I feel like most kids spend a lot of time in childcare/programs, and I wanted to be one of those teachers to make that child's day better by giving them the love and attention they need. I have been working with kids for many years, and knowing that many families appreciate everything I do for their kids makes me very proud and happy to be a teacher.

I will always be grateful for this program and wouldn't want other people to miss this opportunity. Before knowing about this program, I considered getting another job - maybe doing something different that pays more because I needed to pay my school loans from when I graduated college. I don't make a lot of money as an early educator. After receiving this award, I could pay my loans and stay and not worry about having to take money out of my check to pay for my loans. Now I can use that money to pay bills or buy other things.

I have been working with kids for over 7 years, and my number one priority is to love and care for those children who spend so much time in daycare and other programs. I would love to continue to work and teach my kids, and I would appreciate it if you keep this program and continue to help other teachers like me who love working with kids. Sometimes, it is hard to make enough for yourself and your family. Thank you for making me part of this opportunity; I am beyond grateful. Thank you!

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

Niurkys Arias

Teacher

Children's Workshop

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 Brittany Alton and I am a Teacher and Education Coordinator at Family Tree III.

I'm an early childhood educator and have been for twelve years because I love children. I love being a part of their growth and development. Watching them grow into toddlers and being a part of that is a huge honor, and I wouldn't want to do anything else.

The retention bonuses and the WAGE\$ program helped me stay in my position without worrying about childcare for my 4-year-old son. Without these benefits, I couldn't stay in the childcare field and maintain my household simultaneously.

These benefits are life-changing for early childhood professionals. I urge you to keep them.

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

Brittany Alton

Teacher and Education Coordinator

Family Tree III

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 Almeida and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Roger Williams Daycare Center.

I graduated from Rhode Island College in May 2023 with a bachelor's in early childhood education. I've become an early childhood educator because I strive to help children thrive as successful young people who can navigate through life, society, and their potential careers. Children need to learn basic skills early to succeed in their academic years.

The Step Up to WAGE\$ Supplements were of great benefit to me. Thanks to this program, I was able to assist my family in paying certain bills and buying food, clothes, and other necessities. Thanks to these programs, I could remain in my field of work for an extended period of time. The only downside is that I have to pay more in taxes. Regardless, I'm thankful for the financial boost.

The Step Up to WAGE\$ supplements offer immense relief to those financially struggling due to low income. The program should continue because it motivates early childhood educators to remain in their field of work. Too often, I see co-workers give up and quit their jobs due to stress, lack of interest, frustration, and fatigue. And right now, more than ever, we need more advocates representing and fighting for us to stay working. Step Up to WAGE\$ deserves a chance to aid others during their time as early childhood educators because most people forget that children cannot succeed developmentally without the proper teaching from caring and earnest adults.

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

Sharon Almeida

Teacher's Assistant

Roger Williams Daycare 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 a Teacher Assistant at a Head Start Program.

My story began 5 years ago, and I'm so grateful and thankful for my work. When I started working, I was starting my life again; my life had stopped for a while because of cancer. Going through chemo, an operation, and the last radiation was very hard for me and my family. I have 6 children, and as much as they love me, they could not understand why their mom was sick. And why me? But I beat it - I am a survivor and working again.

My passion is to work with children to help them learn and grow. When Step Up to WAGE\$ started, I was financially unstable, and Step Up to WAGE\$ helped me to catch up and get back on track. Through this program, I was able to make enough money to feed my family. I'm grateful and thankful. This program came into my life when I mostly needed it.

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

Teacher Assistant

Head Start 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 Nilda Cancel, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at East Bay Community Action Program.

I'm 60 years old and have worked with children for over 20 years. I love my job, and working with children is my passion. They are the best, and I enjoy watching them learn and grow throughout their early years.

There was a moment in my time when the world had stopped. I was diagnosed with cancer, I lost everything. I could beat it and start all over again, and Step Up to WAGE\$ came through for me financially. Starting over is not easy, but the program helped me greatly. I was able to financially stabilize myself.

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

Nilda Cancel

Teacher's Assistant

East Bay Community Action Program