

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 Simone Woods, and I am a Family Child Care Assistant at Nanny's House.

Working with children during their formative years is a privilege. When they get quality care, love, and attention right from the start, they get the best foundations to build bright futures. I love my job and care that the children leaving our family's childcare are kind, thoughtful, and curious about learning. Teachers and childcare staff do not get paid what they should- but good providers continue to do their job because it's rewarding and makes a positive difference.

The WAGES program extra money helped my family to be able to spend time together on day trips and vacations that would be much harder to afford on my regular pay -it also was an incentive for me to continue at my program with a regular schedule. I also work a second job in a non-childcare setting.

I feel strongly that if an individual must leave one childcare setting to begin directly at another one in RI and be on the list, they should not lose the opportunity to claim the extra money. My specific example is someone who left an eligible program because there weren't enough hours available and went directly to another eligible program with no gap in employment. Because they switched programs, they were deemed ineligible. I don't think that's fair, and different circumstances should be considered.

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

Simone Woods

Family Child Care Assistant

Nanny's House

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 Vaccaro, and I am a Teacher at Rogers Williams Daycare Center.

We need more educated early childhood teachers. With this being said, we go through training (and some of us go through schooling), sometimes more than or equal to other types of educators. However, other educators receive much better pay. We sometimes care for the children in our care more than their parents, as parents have to work to support their own families, but we can't sit in the same place; our pay is insulting.

The wage supplements only help at the moment. It is starting not to make it worth staying in the field.

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Many early education teachers can no longer afford to stay in the career they love because they can't afford to support themselves. Some are also unwilling to stay because of the demands put on us. We are burnt out.

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

Emily Vaccaro

Teacher

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.**

My name is Kelly Winifred, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Children's Workshop Rumford.

I was a preschool teacher from 1980 - 2012. I retired in 2012 and always loved working with children in an early education setting. I became a teacher's assistant in 2019. These programs have been a significant financial help, especially as our pay is minimal. Please continue to fund WAGE\$ and the salary supplements.

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

Kelly Winifred

Teacher's Assistant

Children's Workshop Rumford

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 Valerie Touba, and I am a Teacher at Love4All.

I am an early childhood educator because I am passionate about fueling the next generation and pouring love into the lives of precious little ones. Having a nurturing and consistent caregiver is vital for the healthy development of young children, and I am honored to play that role for them daily.

I would not be able to stay at my job with my current pay had it not been for the supplemental help of the pandemic retention bonus and the Step up to Wage\$ programs. My regular income cannot provide for my basic needs and help me save for the future.

Please consider continuing this funding for the educators' sake and for these students to keep their teachers whom they have grown so comfortable and close with.

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

Valerie Touba

Teacher

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 Emma Tellier, and I am a Teacher's Assistant at Sacred Heart School.

I am currently a TA in a Catholic school. I started working here as a toddler teacher, but when our daycare program closed, I merged into the school as a TA. I recently graduated with my bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders and am currently in a master's program in speech-language pathology. Working as a TA has been a great stepping stone to learning the ins and outs of the education system.

I am so proud to say that with these grants, I have graduated with my bachelor's degree debt-free. The money has kept me from taking out any loans and has given me the peace of mind to continue my education and obtain a graduate degree.

My coworkers and I are such a close-knit family, and in a particularly difficult field, these grants have been the one constant that makes the field more doable. The school we work for is small, and our pay often doesn't reciprocate the degree of our responsibilities. At the end of the day, we are early childhood educators for the children.

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

Emma Tellier

Teacher's Assistant

Sacred Heart 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 Julie Vakian, and I am a Teacher at the Children's Workshop.

I am truly happy doing what I do and love going to work every day. I know that I make a difference in the lives of the infants I care for and their families.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough money in the field of child care. Despite how hard we work and how qualified/professional, we are not paid enough. The WAGE\$ program and salary supplements are a big help; it is money we work hard for and deserve.

If the state of RI wants to provide quality child care, we NEED to continue funding programs like Step Up to WAGE\$.

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

Julie Vakian

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 Emily Vaccaro, and I am a Teacher at Roger Williams Day Care Center.

I went to a local college for my early childhood education degree. I love my field of work. Each group of students becomes my kids, and I love watching them grow and learn.

The WAGE\$ program helped me pay for groceries and other needed items. They have helped me stay at my job for almost 3 years now. We need to be paid a livable wage. We are short-staffed, underpaid, overworked, and burnt out. Many coworkers have left or are planning on leaving because of being unable to pay bills. Daycares are unable to keep staff or increase staff because no one wants to work at a high-demand job that pays less than fast food

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

Emily Vaccaro

Teacher

Roger Williams Day 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 Tynicka Tillman, and I am a Teacher at Stork's Nest Child Academy.

I am a Kindergarten and K-Prep teacher working in an East Greenwich, RI childcare facility. I have worked there since January 2011. Before this, I worked at a non-profit childcare center in Providence, RI. I graduated from Mount Pleasant High School's Teacher Academy in 2002 and Wheelock College with a degree as a Child Care Specialist in 2006.

Ever since I can remember, I have always been "a teacher." While other kids were doing what kids do, I often stayed inside and prepared "lessons" for my younger cousins or stuffed animals. Although I was told that if you go to school for teaching, you can't do it for the money, I didn't care. Teaching and nurturing our nation's children is a work of heart. We can help shape and change the future through our work with children. I may not be able to change the world alone, but through teaching, I can help plant the seeds for change and foster a love of learning in our youth.

It wasn't long after entering the workforce before I realized that if you are not working in the public education system, you REALLY are going to have a hard time making ends meet. Unfortunately, childcare workers are not paid sufficiently, even those highly qualified with college credits or ECE degrees. My student loans have been in forbearance for as long as I can remember. Despite what I was told before graduating, childcare educator pay rates do not give much room for paying for your needs and bills. My student loan amount is about as much as the accumulated interest due to being unable to make payments without sacrificing buying my children food or paying for shelter.

The money from WAGE\$ has allowed us to have actual breathing room. It has allowed me to put money aside for Christmas presents without struggling, purchase birthday gifts, and even fulfill two growing boys' clothing and food needs. These grants have also allowed me to invest more money and time into my classroom, which is like my second home. I can afford a mortgage payment for my family's first home rather than paying rent for a multi-family apartment. If these grants can be continued, I can get out of debt, which, at this point, I never thought would be possible without filing for bankruptcy.

I would mainly like policymakers and funders to truly hear our cries. Taking care of children, nurturing them, fostering a love of learning, and caring for the whole child's development is an

have no more to give and must consider leaving a career we are passionate about. I have watched qualified teachers resign from the field reluctantly for higher-paying jobs. Our children deserve the best. They deserve teachers who love teaching and deserve to do what they love without sacrificing financial stability and growth.

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

Tynicka Tillman

Teacher

Stork's Nest Child 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 Sonia Vetelino, a Teacher at Tricounty Community Action Head Start.

I am an early childhood teacher. I love teaching young children. The children in my class are from low-income families, and I feel that these children need the most exposure to preschool before kindergarten.

These wage supplements have helped me because our program is not paid like a district teacher. My job is so rewarding working with the children, and we also help their families and bond with them. It is so gratifying to see families achieve success. These bonuses from WAGE\$ have helped me stay at my job.

Since food and gas prices have been high, receiving these WAGE\$ bonuses have helped me afford things for my family.

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

Sonia Vetelino

Teacher

Tricounty Community Action Head Start

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 Nina Tavares, and I am an Owner and Family Child Care Provider at Nina's Home Day Care.

Teaching has been my dream come true for me. I have been teaching infants - pre-k for 13 years now. I don't see myself doing anything else. My oldest son helped me become interested in caring for children with delayed motor skills and language development. I believe each child learns at their own pace. Childcare and teachers are one team that communicates to help children grow.

I have owned and operated my childcare home for 3 years now. We have so much diversity and involvement within the city of Providence. I never closed my communication with the Elmhurst community. We will forever be the support when it comes to raising children. My husband and I have 4 children who are now in school. So, people come to us as veterans when it comes to children.

The funding has made us always want to improve our daycare materials. With the money received from WAGE\$, we have purchased office supplies, classroom toys, and backyard equipment. Each year, we update all materials, and our goal is to have updated motor skill activities as the children grow continuously. We have been able to do family engagement nights in our backyard and prepare for a pre-k classroom setting. Over the past couple of years, I have become a voice for all Hispanic women who want to open a business and have been able to help anyone interested in childcare in our city.

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

Nina Tavares

Owner and Family Child Care Provider

Nina's Home Day Care