



Rhode Island Association for the
Education of Young Children



Right from the
Start

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to voice my support for **HB7317: An Act Relating To Education -- Rhode Island Early Educator Workforce Act**, which would continue funding for WAGE\$, which provides education-based salary supplements to center-based educators and family childcare providers working with children in an early childhood setting.

My name is Alishia Bickham, and I am a Lead Preschool Teacher at Sunshine Child Development Center. This supplement has helped me in many ways, both financially and personally. As inflation rises, my pay has not increased enough to afford basic necessities like gas or food. I have a bachelor's degree in early childhood, and I work very hard at meeting the individual needs of the children in my classroom. I can also buy small items for my classroom as needed. Overall, those of us who work in this profession do not get paid as much as we should. We work just as hard as public-school teachers, hold similar degrees, follow RIDE/RIELDS standards, complete assessments, conduct parent-teacher conferences, etc.

We deserve more pay, and I do hope these funds will remain available for years to come. This supplemental wage program helps me financially, as I've gone years without a rate of pay increase. I love working in Preschool; however, due to inflation and rising costs, I may have to find other ways to make ends meet.

I would like you to know that those of us in this profession love early childhood, families, and watching young children grow. We challenge, motivate, and nurture young children. We shape their minds positively and prepare them for elementary school using a set of guidelines from RIDE. We work very hard and are not recognized as professionals, both financially and respectfully.

Sincerely,

Alishia Bickham