



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 **SB2369: 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.

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB2369: An Act Relating to Education—Rhode Island Early Educator Workforce Act, which continues funding for the WAGE\$ program. This initiative provides essential, education-based salary supplements to both center-based educators and family childcare providers who serve our youngest learners.

WAGE\$ represents a thoughtful and evidence-informed approach to strengthening the early childhood workforce. By directly linking compensation to educational attainment, the program not only incentivizes professional growth but also promotes the retention of skilled, dedicated educators in a field that is foundational to children’s long-term development. In practice, these supplements help educators remain in the profession, reduce turnover, and sustain the continuity of care that is so critical during the early years.

Across early learning settings, including community-based programs and family childcare homes, educators are balancing increasing expectations with limited compensation. WAGE\$ helps address this imbalance in a meaningful way—supporting those who are committed to advancing their education while continuing to provide high-quality care and instruction.

This investment extends far beyond the workforce itself. When educators are supported and retained, children benefit from stable, nurturing relationships, and families gain confidence in the consistency and quality of care. In turn, communities are strengthened through improved educational outcomes and a more reliable early care infrastructure.

I respectfully urge you to support SB2369 and continue funding for WAGE\$. Doing so affirms the value of early educators and reinforces Rhode Island’s commitment to high-quality early childhood education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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.

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Jody SW Bernard, and I serve as the Director and Education Coordinator of the Genesis Child Development and Learning Center. I am writing to express my strong support for HB7317: An Act Relating to Education—Rhode Island Early Educator Workforce Act, which sustains funding for the WAGE\$ program.

WAGE\$ is a critical workforce investment that directly strengthens the stability and quality of early childhood education programs. In our center, these education-based salary supplements have had a tangible impact—enabling educators to reinvest in their classrooms, maintain reliable transportation, and meet essential living expenses. More importantly, the program affirms the value of a highly skilled workforce in a field that has historically been undercompensated.

As a community-based program, we are unable to offer salaries comparable to those in public or privately funded school systems. WAGE\$ helps mitigate this disparity by incentivizing educational attainment and supporting retention of qualified educators. This continuity of care is essential; research consistently demonstrates that stable, responsive relationships with caregivers are foundational to young children’s social-emotional development, early learning, and long-term success.

Sustained investment in the early childhood workforce is not only a matter of fairness—it is a strategic commitment to educational equity and economic stability. When we support educators, we strengthen families, improve program quality, and build a more resilient future for our communities.

I respectfully urge you to continue funding WAGE\$ through HB7317 and to prioritize policies that elevate and sustain the early childhood workforce.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

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