



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 Laura Cline, and I am a Lead Teacher at Cadence Academy Preschool in Smithfield, RI. Our field is not a money maker. We are vital for early childhood education and vital to parents who have to work. We show up every day for them, and the children in our care, and our pay does not reflect our importance. It's nice to get this extra bonus.

If the entirety of the early childhood field went on strike tomorrow, it would set off chain reactions. Parents need us to be able to be at their jobs every day. Oftentimes, we see their children for more waking hours than they do. We reassure their safety. We teach them social-emotional skills and basic self-help skills. We teach them early literacy, appreciation for music, and art. We snuggle them when they are sick, sad, or just in need of extra love. We bridge the gap between school and home. In some situations, we are the only constant these children have.

The birth through 3 years old timeline is the most important years of a child's life. It is the scaffolding for their future, and we are helping with that construction. We matter. It needs to be reflected in our pay. This program is an excellent start.

Sincerely,

Laura Cline