



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 Lauren Buell, and I am a Preschool Assistant at Progressive Learning for Children. The supplement has helped ease the financial burden, which has been a major source of stress in my marriage, and has helped me feel less stressed, so I perform better in all aspects of life. My husband wants me to leave this field to make more money. The supplement, if ongoing, would allow me to remain in this field, which I have been in for over 20 years as a lead and an assistant.

In this field, we get paid very little. Most centers require a lead to have an Associate's Degree or higher, but this job pays a fraction of what other fields offer when an employee has a degree. We do it because we love it, and I believe it is critical to a child's future success. Nowadays, families need childcare and want quality education, but we do not make a livable wage in a field that is somewhat essential for professionals with young children.

Sincerely,

Lauren Buell