



Rhode Island Association for the  
Education of Young Children



**Right** from the  
**Start**

The Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (RIAIEYC) voices its strong support for **H7317**  
**The Early Educator Workforce Act.**

This bill would establish a new section of state law that acknowledges the importance of the early educator workforce and codifies effective strategies helping Rhode Island's child care and early learning programs attract, develop, and retain qualified and caring staff. It establishes both the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Workforce Development program and the RI Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship program in state law.

The early childhood workforce is vital to Rhode Island. Early childhood educators allow for parents to work and contribute to our state's economy. Most importantly they help build the foundation for our children's development, which we know is so critical in the early years. Yet they're undervalued and underpaid. 43% of early educators in Rhode Island rely on public benefits to make ends meet.\*

**Child Care WAGE\$ was able to award 201 early childhood educators but we have another 192 on the waitlist waiting for additional funds!**

- The average wage of a Child Care WAGE\$ recipients was \$17 per hour
- Child Care programs who have employed Child Care WAGE\$ recipients are reporting significant retention rates. The most recent data points to a 92% staff retention.
- 93% of recipients stated WAGE\$ supplement has helped ease their financial stress.
- 89% of recipients stated that Child Care WAGE\$ has made it possible for them to be able to pay bills- this money goes directly back into the RI economy!

Many of these educators have taken their time to submit their testimony in strong support of House Bill 7317. I urge you to read their stories and how Child Care WAGE\$ has impacted their lives. These programs have been proven successful to date and they are keeping educators in classrooms and preventing further closures. The economic premise is simple: Better-staffed early care and education programs will increase the supply of child care, allowing more parents to remain in the workforce.

On behalf of our Rhode Island early childhood workforce and the children and families who depend on them, we urge you to pass the Early Educator Workforce Act.

Thank You