

Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

June 2, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Committee:

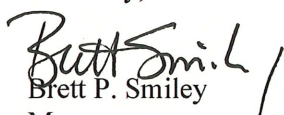
I support Senate Bill 2369, *An Act Relating to Education – The Rhode Island Early Educator Workforce Act*. If enacted, this legislation would direct the RI Departments of Human Services and Education to strengthen the state's existing early education workforce development programs. This bill would also allocate at least \$1 million to continue the Child Care WAGE\$ program, which provides education-based wage supplements to early educators.

Rhode Island has been a leader in rebuilding and sustaining the early educator workforce following significant pandemic-era staffing losses through programs like Child Care WAGE\$ and the T.E.A.C.H scholarship program. Despite these efforts, childcare educators still earn one of the lowest wages across the state, earning less than \$17 an hour in 2024. These low wages, combined with the demanding nature of childcare, make these workforce development programs critical to retaining the workforce. Senate Bill 2369 will also build a pipeline of early education educators and teacher assistants through registered apprenticeship programs, further strengthening the workforce.

In Providence, we continue to support our early educators. A new partnership with Brown University, Community College of Rhode Island, and Providence Public School District (PPSD) recently launch a program for PPSD teaching assistants to enroll in the CCRI certificate program to expand their career opportunities and the number of certified early educators. But Providence cannot do it alone, the state needs to use all tools available to support and expand our early educator workforce and ensure the quality of early education classrooms. Continuing state-funded early education workforce development programs is critical to sustaining the State's mixed delivery model for Pre-K.

I thank the sponsor of this legislation and urge the committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 2369.

Sincerely,


Brett P. Smiley
Mayor