



Testimony of Karen Rainville
Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children
Before the Human Services Committee
March 5, 2015

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the low wage workers bill. My name is Karen Rainville I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children.

Quality, credentials and compensation: 3 factors which are critical in creating and maintaining the best possible learning environment for children.

In Connecticut we have spent the last decade working to create policies that lead to quality improvements in early childhood programs. We have mandated NAEYC accreditation for all programs receiving state funding. As a result Connecticut currently ranks 3rd in the country in the number of NAEYC accredited programs. We have passed legislation mandating that by 2015 50% of teachers in state funded programs will have a BS degree and by 2020 that number moves to 100%. As a result we have highly qualified teachers leading early childhood classrooms across the state. What we have not done however, in any way, is to address teacher compensation and **as a result we are headed towards a crisis in the early childhood field.**

Early Childhood teachers are among the lowest wage earners in the state. Teachers are earning their degrees, supported largely through state funded scholarship dollars, and taking those degrees to other jobs that can pay them a decent wage. In one large childcare program in Waterbury, 9 teachers over the last year obtained their Bachelor's degrees and all 9 teachers are now working in other places that can pay them a salary comparable to their education level. One of those teachers is bartending because she makes more money. **9 teachers** – and that is only one program in one community-the story is the same all across the state.

Low wages lead to high turnover and low quality. Given what we know about brain research and the critical importance of the first 5 years of a child life – this is just unacceptable!

Early Childhood programs cannot retain qualified staff unless we fix this problem by finally addressing the early childhood compensation issue in this state. I implore you to move this bill forward.