

Testimony of Amber Creighton Pandey

Phelps Ingersoll Center for Children at the Northern Middlesex YMCA

Before the Human Services Committee

March 12, 2015, SB 1044

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 1044. My name is Amber Creighton Pandey. I am a preschool teacher at the Phelps Ingersoll Center for Children at the Northern Middlesex YMCA in Middletown, CT.

I am testifying today about wages for early childhood teachers. This issue is extremely important to me because I have been an early childhood educator since 2005. I currently hold a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education, which left me with close to \$100,000.00 dollars of student loan debt. I was passionate and excited to begin my career in early childhood education, but it was very difficult to find a good paying position in early education. In nine years of working in the field I have never earned an annual salary of more than \$30,000.00. I live pay check to pay check, paying off debts and cost of living expenses. In the ten years since I graduated from college I have not been able to move out of my parent's home.

When I chose to become a teacher I never expected to make "a lot" of money, but I did think I would be able to make a decent living. I thought the expense of my college education would be a financial investment in my future, but have yet to see a return on my initial investment.

I work 40 hours per week, 12 months per year, in order to earn salary of \$28,000.00 - \$30,000.00. I am told other early childhood educators in my city earn less that I do! At the same time my peers in other education fields, make a significantly higher annual salary. The average classroom teacher works 35 hours a week over 10 months of the year. According to the National Education Association the average classroom teacher in Connecticut earns an annual salary of over \$63,000.00. What is the justification?

I have put in the same level of study and higher education as a public school teacher, yet my pay is 52% less. I hold a CT teacher certification, but have chosen the early childhood field since it is my passion. When I have to renew my teaching license it costs me almost a week's pay!

In the preschool where I have worked for the last 9 years I have seen many other educators struggle to make a living, eventually they leave the profession. Teachers are a school's most valuable resource. If we want to encourage others to pursue their studies in early childhood education and keep educated individuals in early childhood classrooms we need to compensate them fairly for the important work they do every day, all year long.

I thank you for your time and for your consideration of the important issue of worthy wages in early childhood education.

Amber Creighton Pandey