

**Lindsey O'Brien**  
**Childcare Learning Centers, Inc.**  
**SUPPORT SB1044 AAC RECOUPMENT OF STATE COSTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS**  
**Before the Human Services Committee**  
**March 12, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercombie, and members of the Committee.

My name is Lindsey O'Brien and I am a full time School Readiness Teacher at the Childcare Learning Centers, Inc. in Stamford, CT.

I am writing this testimony in support SB1044 AAC the Recoupment of State Costs Attributable to Low Wage Employers.

As you know, this bill would require large employers paying less than \$15 per hour to pay a fee to the state. The funds generated from this fee will be appropriated to the Department of Social Services and Development Services and the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Currently this bill applies to low wage employers with 500 or more employees. We would request that the committee reduce this to employers with 250 employees.

It is imperative that the funds appropriated to the OEC be used to improve early childhood education in the state with an emphasis on raising the wages of early childhood teachers like myself.

I am testifying today that the wages we are earning as hard working early childhood educators is making it very difficult to live a comfortable life. I have received my Associates in Early Childhood Education and have student loans amounting over \$38,000.00, yet my yearly income falls between the 32%-35% of the State Median Income. I am currently forced to work 2 jobs in order to be able to pay my bills and there are many months where I struggle to get everything paid on time. I have often had to seek personal loans from family and friends to avoid late fees and penalties. I currently live with my boyfriend in an apartment which we rent and there have been several months where I was forced to absorb the late fee from my landlord due to the fact that I had to wait for an additional paycheck to cover the rent. Aside from rent I have student loans, car payment, car insurance, health insurance, telephone bills, utilities, groceries, gas and more. It is merely impossible with the salary I am earning. I find myself constantly ignoring phone calls from collection agencies because I merely don't have the funds to pay them yet. I am asking myself far too often, "which of these bills can wait until next month?" I have had my lights cut off, my cable cut off and my heat/hot water turned off because I just could not afford it that month.

It is very stressful when you work as hard as we do and you are as dedicated as we are, yet you simply feel like you are not being properly compensated. We, as teachers, are working with these children and families within our schools 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, compared to Public School teachers who work approximately 10 months out of the year with a beginning salary of \$48,695.00. I am currently making under \$29,000.00. There is a huge gap between these two starting salaries, yet there is such a push for us, as School Readiness teachers, to work closely with the public schools in order to ensure the children are ready to begin kindergarten.

As an early childhood educator we are always encouraged to continue our education further, yet the reward is not all that much. As a 25 year old woman working 2 jobs, 7 days a week, in order to pay my bills, I am finding it extremely difficult to take classes. I leave the classroom many nights a week and head straight to the restaurant I work at, often not getting off until 10pm and returning to CLC at 7:30am the following day. It is very discouraging having to work so hard and still make so little.

I appreciate your time in this important matter and ask you to strongly consider what we are asking for. We are caring for these young children on a daily basis and they are the future generation. What we do is of an utmost importance in our communities and we should be compensated for our time and hard work.