



MIDDLESEX YMCA

**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

February 16, 2015

Testimony of Taylor Duckworth
Middlesex YMCA
Before the Education Committee

(DATE OF HEARING TBA)

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee,

I am so grateful the Education Committee is taking time to listen to testimony today. My name is Taylor Duckworth, and I have been a Director of a School Readiness program for over 4 years.

Today I would like to explain my perspective on the necessity for worthy wages for early childhood teachers. This is a critical issue which is very important for our children. Poor wages DO have a domino effect on our children. Here is a typical scenario that has happened to me several times in the last four years:

- Existing teachers have to go to college in order to maintain their credentials and therefore their employment.
- Teachers take out school loans to afford the tuition.
- Teachers work hard to get good grades while working full time in the classroom. They are more tired than if they didn't go to school too, but they don't let it show in the classroom!
- Teachers get a degree in Early Childhood. Yay!
- Teachers' pay can't be increased. (We had a very small increase last year, but that was the first time in a long time. That increase went to pay cost of living salary increases and the increased costs in heat, electric, insurance, and other similar necessities.)
- Teachers can't afford to pay new school loans on their existing salary. They start job hunting.
- Teachers get a great new job working for the public school, with amazing benefits, better hours, and a huge salary increase.
- We have to spend extra dollars on advertising for their vacated position, hiring, orientation, and training. The cost of these expenses comes out of our already stretched budget.
- Staff, parents, and children have a new teacher with whom they need to start building a brand new relationship. Relationships are critical to children and the learning process, but take a great deal of time to cultivate.

I have hired some amazing new teachers right out of college with Bachelor's Degrees too. They took a position in our School Readiness program with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, as soon as they become employed, their student loan repayment began. They soon realized: with what we are paying, they cannot afford their loan payments.

Over and over, we become merely a stepping stone, a temporary job, until they can find a "good job" with enough pay to sustain their bills. With a significant increase in funding, we would be able to pay wages worthy of the teaching credentials now required, retaining our teachers and the investment in time and resources. In this way, we can continue to deepen the wonderful relationships which have been built, relationships which are so important for children's development.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Taylor Duckworth

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