

To: Senator Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair
Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Co-Chair
Senator Gary Winfield, Vice Chair
Representative Bobby Sanchez, Vice Chair
Senator Toni Boucher, Ranking Member
Representative Gail Lavielle, Ranking Member
Distinguished Members of the Education Committee

HB 5557 AN ACT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

From: Darlene C. Ragozzine

Date: March 7, 2015

My name is Darlene C Ragozzine, I was a Professor of Early Childhood Education at our CT Community College system, where I taught for 13 years and then directed the state's professional development system, CT Charts-A-Course for 20 years. Currently, I provide consulting services in the area of professional development and wage models in early childhood. First, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today in support of RB 5557 and to thank Senator Sanchez for his leadership on this bill, which will provide an ability to increase the wages in a field that has been sorely underpaid, mainly child care and to tie the compensation schedule (lines 1, 2) to the proposed OEC, QRIS (line 39-40). For decades, workers have been supporting Connecticut families with their own foregone wages, while families work and try to better themselves financially. Indeed, it is high time that we reexamine the issue of compensation for the low wages workers who care and educate our youngest children from low-wage families, of whom many are themselves.

I could be quoting and pointing you to all the research in the field of early childhood, which would give you all the factors and components of a quality program, including the education and training of the teacher, and how it can impact positive outcomes for children. But instead, I have attached an article written by Linda k. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, entitled "Current Wages, Despite Educational Attainment, and Undermines Quality Care Goals". This article points to the fact that "what we know is that quality care is related to the strength of the workforce, which means the education and training, the experience and pay to attract and retain care givers who can offer high quality care". She goes on to state

that high quality care costs more to provide. Of special note in the article is the data on the differentiation of pay between a teacher with a BA teacher in a public school, versus community based publicly funded programs, which translates to a median gap of \$13,396 per year¹ (lines 24-26).

Calculating the true costs of quality care and cost of living in the state (line 27) , which includes increased salaries and tying that cost to the proposed QRIS (lines 39-40) , will attract and retain higher educated staff and to maintain low child care staff , while not solely putting the burden on programs.

The confluences of paying higher salaries or minimum wage, not raising parent fees and finding a source of revenue to support the increase employees' wages is the "trilemma that has plagued this field for decades and we can longer afford to experience.

I urge the committee to dive into this article and to implement the proposed solutions suggested in RB 5557.

Connecticut can be a leader in the country with the passage of this bill. It takes an innovative approach to begin to remedy an issue that has can no longer be ignored. For the sake of our youngest children, we cannot afford the cost of inadequate compensation for their caregivers and teachers.

I urge the committee to move this forward. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Respectively Submitted,



Darlene Ragozzine

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¹ National Survey of Early Care and Education. US Department of Health and Human Services. 2013.