



## PRECIOUS MEMORIES CHILDCARE CENTER LLC

***“WE STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION”***

### TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

#### HOUSE BILL 5557

March 4, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, distinguished members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 5557. I am testifying in support of House Bill 5557. (Early childhood teachers in state-funded programs are grossly underpaid while at the same time facing increasing education requirements. Early childhood teacher wages in state-funded programs are low because state reimbursement rates are so low.) My name is Cindy Schacht. I am the Program Director for Precious Memories in Bridgeport, CT. I have been in the field of Early Childhood Education for over 30 years. In that time, I have seen little change in the salaries of Early Childhood Educators. For over 20 years, I was a Preschool teacher myself and had to supplement my income in order to make ends meet. It was always a challenge. I then decided to pursue an Administrative position in the field of Early Childhood so that I might increase my wages and have a better opportunity for a successful work/life balance. Instead, my work/life balance became more unbalanced as my responsibilities increased, and therefore, I had less time for my personal life and invested more time in my work. In addition, when I became an Administrator, I had to leave the classroom where I was most comfortable and capable. When I left my prior teaching position to become a Director, the program pleaded with me to stay, as they stated I was one of the best teachers they had ever had in their program. I explained the financial aspect of my decision, and they clearly understood. I am now in Administration, because that is what I can afford to do, and it also allows me to stay connected to the children and families while making a bit more money, along with a great deal more responsibility. It is the only way for me to remain in the field. Don't get me wrong – I LOVE my job, but I never would have left the classroom if I could have afforded to stay.

At the present time, I work for a PDG program (Preschool Development Grant) that pays its teachers' salaries comparable to Public School Teachers. The differences in the salaries of the teachers and the Administrative staff are minimal. I am hoping to see Preschool teachers across the board make salaries comparable to Public School Teachers and Directors salaries to reflect the amount of responsibility we have, as well.

The first 6 years of a child's life are when the most learning occurs. If we are not paying our teachers comparable salaries, we will not obtain the teachers with the best qualifications. If we are asking our teachers to further their educations, we should either

be helping them to pay for their education, or be paying them higher salaries. The children are our future. We must provide the best for them from the start!

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Cindy Schacht, Program Director, Precious Memories

