

March 1, 2017

TO: Members of the Education Committee

FROM: Michele Eathorne

RE: Testimony

Esteemed Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Michele Eathorne, Director of Curriculum and Communication at the YWCA New Britain school-readiness childcare program. I am writing in regard to **Bill SB 912 (AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS)** and **HB 7155 AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP A PROPOSED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE.)**

Our organization serves more than 220 children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years of age. We are one of the larger programs here in New Britain serving much needed early care here in the community. We are a state-funded, school-readiness program and NAEYC Accredited. Our mission is to support young children in our community by providing a high quality early education experience and ensure that the children in our program are prepared for kindergarten.

More than half of our children enrolled in our program receive Care 4 Kids vouchers and many who we serve are from low income families. The need for high-quality early childhood education is of extreme importance to our community's future success of their children.

Highly trained early education teachers are also a key component to a high-quality early childhood educational program, as well. Skilled teachers are an absolute necessary in meeting the high quality standards needed for NAEYC Accreditation and for preparing our children for school-readiness. Teachers, with degrees in Early Childhood Education, are in short supply! Many are steering clear of the field due to low salary and high expectations. We need to have more flexibility in the requirements being asked of them such as, accepting out-of-state four-year degrees in Early Childhood.

This shortage of teachers is impacting the classroom function, oftentimes being filled in with substitutes or the administrative staff. Many of the resumes we receive do not meet the credentials needed to meet the state requirement. This shortage negatively

impacts the program, which then trickles down to the children and is not sustainable for high-quality programming. Therefore, we support the changes indicated through the passage of SB 912.

Additionally, with the regulatory requirements of staff credentialing and early childhood professionals with four-year degree, we are concerned about the impact of HB 7155. Without commensurate measures to increase School Readiness funds or action to re-open Care for Kids is very concerning and their cuts will impact fair and equitable wages for early childhood professionals.

The Legislators attention and continued support of Early Education is much appreciated. We look forward to working to resolve these issues in partnership with you and The Office of Early Childhood.