

## Testimony in Opposition to HB 5450

The Early Childhood Higher Ed Consortium has been meeting since 2005; it is a forum offering early childhood faculty across public and private four-year and two-year colleges and universities around the state the chance to communicate regularly about the training of early childhood teachers. We have discussed pre-service as well as on-going education and training of early childhood teachers and have applauded legislation that created a career ladder that supports ALL individuals who aspire to be lead teachers in our school readiness and Head Start classrooms to complete Bachelor-level training and education. The proposed legislation, HB 5450, will undo this by modifying the cap on the educational requirement for early childhood classroom lead teachers to an Associate's degree level. Bachelor-level training is important because training in the four-year colleges promotes and advances the skills that are essential to addressing the learning needs of all children:

- To be intentional in responding to the developmental and learning needs of the children in their classroom
- to individualize instruction to enable all children to engage in learning activities
- to investigate and research strategies that have been written about by others as a basis for the experiences they offer
- to reflect on their experiences in the classroom and modify them
- to understand the essential role of parents, families, and communities in the well-being and learning of their children and to engage with them at all levels to support children
- to advocate for young children and their families at multiple levels, including with early education centers, communities, and state policymakers

A cornerstone of the values that we as early childhood faculty hold is that all members of the workforce should have access to supports that encourage them to continue their education and professional development. Current legislation passed in recent years encourages members of the early childhood workforce, and especially those who aspire to be lead teachers, to attain this level of training. We feel that HB 5450 will limit opportunities for teachers as well as children. Only if legislation sets the bar high will structures and funding be in place to support our early childhood workforce. Putting attention on supporting the workforce through loan forgiveness, salary incentives, and scholarship will benefit children and their teachers.

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