

TESTIMONY of Denise Falzone

March 13, 2018

RE: RB 5450 – An Act Concerning Staff Qualifications Requirement For Early Childhood Education

Senators Slossberg & Boucher, Representatives Fleischman and Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Education Committee – my name is Denise Falzone I am the Head Teacher of the PDG classroom in Seymour at TEAM Inc., an organization that provides high-quality Early Childhood Education throughout Greater Naugatuck Valley, Milford, and Waterbury, including Infant/Toddler & Preschool via the School Readiness Initiative, Child Day Care, Preschool Development Grants, Head Start, MIECHV, and more. I have worked in early childhood for 15 years of my career.

**I am writing in strong opposition to RB 5450 –
Early Education Facts**

- 97% of Early Educators are female
- The national median annual wages are \$28,570 in Connecticut preschool teachers earn 32% of what a Kindergarten teacher earns
- The current demands on children entering Kindergarten requires a quality foundations provided by teachers with a degree and an understanding of Child Development and the ability to put their education into practice.
- Early childhood educators must have an understanding of children’s cognitive and social emotional development and knowledge of a broad range of subject matters.

- Early childhood professionals are better able to support children especially low-income, dual language learners and children with special education needs
- Clear connections between positive early learning experiences and later success in life
- Perry Preschool Project
- Measured children living in poverty and were at a high risk for poor school performance. They studied if these children would do better academically if in a high quality preschool. The students were tracked until age 40. Those who attended preschool had
- Higher earnings
- Committed fewer crimes
- Were more likely to hold jobs
- Were more likely to graduate High School
Than those that didn’t attend preschool

- Although the study was not meant to measure teacher performance (ones with degrees and ones without degrees)
- The Perry research noted that the classroom they studied were all run by teachers with Bachelor’s degrees and concluded that the teaches with “early childhood training was most relevant to their classroom practices”

- Personal information

When I entered the field of Early Education in 2003 I had a few college credits and very little experience working with young children. I was encouraged to obtain my CDA (Child Development Associate) I viewed this as the first step in my career.

I then obtained my Associate degree in Early Childhood education and went on to a Head Teacher job with TEAM. Six months into the job I was informed that my degree was not valid in Connecticut and in order to keep my position I must enroll in school. Under the direction of Connecticut Charts a Course they helped me find a university that would accept my credits and fit my needs as a single mother to obtain my BS in Child and Family Development. Working full time and going to school with 2 children was a struggle for me but I felt it was the best decision not only to keep my job but to further myself as an educator. In 2014 I graduated with my degree.

The profession that I have chosen has always been seen as an overpaid “baby sitter” and I have been told how I will “never make any money”. This is about giving children a great start providing young children with social experiences and hands on learning. Teachers with knowledge and experience are the best to prepare these children for the increased demands of our public education system.

I worked hard to obtain my degree along with my ECTC (early childhood teaching credential) and financially invested in my future as an educator like so many other teachers I work with and mentor. The investment we make in the lives of young children will have an impact on the future not only for the children but the entire community they live in.

Taking away degree requirements only reinforces the notion that we are “baby sitters” and takes the entire field of early education back 30 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration for high-quality Early Care & Education.

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