

TESTIMONY of Jamie Peterson

March 13, 2018

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

Senators Slossberg & Boucher, Representatives Fleischmand Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Education Committee – my name is Jamie Peterson and I am the Director of Early Childhood 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 committed my entire career towards supporting children and families through Early Childhood Education.

**I am writing in strong opposition to RB 5450** – it does not support nor recognize the tremendous investment many of our Early Childhood educators have made to the field. It is well known that **early experiences matter** for young children and a strong and well educated workforce helps to support the dynamic needs of the children and families that we serve each day. In addition, RB 5450 disregards the remarkable progress Connecticut’s early childhood workforce has made not only in turning a corner with increasing the educational levels of the staff, but also with regard to early childhood being viewed as a profession vs. a simple occupation.

Increased credentials creates the potential for early childhood to be viewed as a more attractive career opportunity for young professionals. We then have the potential to recruit a larger, stronger workforce, increase the wages of staff and create greater staff retention within the field.

It is undeniable that increased credentials in any field, will lead to increased outcomes. It remains unseen why we would choose to lessen the credentials to support what should be one of Connecticut’s main priorities- investing early into the future of our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration for high-quality Early Care & Education – including its workforce and the outcomes for young children & families.

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