

TESTIMONY of Kelly Willette

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 Kelly Willette, I am the Head Teacher Mentor 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 11 years of my career.

I am writing in strong opposition to RB 5450:

Decreasing educational requirements for early childhood educators would not only be a disservice for educators but also a disservice for the children and families that we work with daily. It would lower the standards in a field that is already struggling to maintain high priority in our society;

- Educators spend a lot of time and money earning higher education degrees to have the knowledge to create developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children and be able to explain what learning is taking place within those experiences. The learning that takes place in higher education classrooms revolves around the development of young children and how we can enhance that development.
- The work that we do with young children is not merely babysitting. We are using our knowledge to teach young children higher order thinking and social-emotional skills. We are teaching them skills to prepare them for higher learning and later experiences in life.
- We use our knowledge to help determine if children might benefit from outside services to enhance their learning experiences. Without our help the learning gap that exists will only increase.
- We use our knowledge to effectively communicate with families and other professionals. We are the advocates for the children and their families. With our knowledge we can build positive relationships with the individuals we work with which allows us to collaborate for the best interest of young children.
- Decreasing educational requirements for early childhood education teachers would inevitably lower the standards of education for our young children as well.
- These young children are our future; by expecting less from educators these young children are being deprived of the best possible learning experience.
- Turnover is already a major issue in this field. Educators with higher degrees will be passed by for job opportunities because higher education will no longer be thought highly of. This leaves these educators who have worked hard to obtain their degrees in higher education feeling under-appreciated, frustrated, and likely in pursuit of other employment most likely outside of the field of early childhood education.
- Working toward earning a higher education degree in early childhood education also opens the door for more leaders who can make a major impact in our field with the knowledge and experiences that they have gained from their education.

By decreasing the educational requirements for educators in the early childhood education field we are putting facilities in danger of losing educators who are truly dedicated to the field and who are here for the children and their families.

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

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