

<https://datausa.io/profile/soc/252010/#employment>
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2019/TOB/s/pdf/2019SB-00937-R00-SB.PDF>

Hello, my name is Emily Coffey. I am a Uconn student and an intern at the CT Association of Human Services. I am here to support Raised Bill 937: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

As many know, preschool sets the framework for our socioemotional and cognitive skills. The first five years of life are crucial for development. Ultimately, the decisions made by adults affect the development of our youngest population. If anything, the workers servicing this population need the most support. Since the salary and benefits are better for elementary ed teachers, it's no wonder so many workers choose this path instead. Eventually, this abandonment of the ECE field will hurt our children.

As someone who has worked in 4 daycares:

- I was always encouraged to get an ECE degree by my employers, but I chose social work because I wanted more options for myself. I did not find this degree to be worth the money.

- I never made more than \$9.50/hour. When I performed the same exact duties as a paraprofessional for the public school, I made over \$12/hour, and as a para I was never required to have a degree or certifications, all I needed was a high school diploma.

- I never got sick time or paid snow days.

- I often had poor health since working with kids is such a dirty job.

- I did not have the skills or knowledge to handle defiant or aggressive behaviors. These skills were never taught to me by my ECE employer. There were times in the daycare where students would try to flee the room, physically hurt other students and myself, throw things across the room, and destroy property. Having the proper education and training before accepting the job would've made the classroom safer for all. Having better pay would've made me more willing to learn these behavior management skills.

- Teachers often buy toys/supplies out of their own pocket, or track down used/donated toys on their own time. This job is a lifestyle and needs more protections and incentives.

Basically, we see the good, the bad, and the ugly! These kids need us. What benefits us will benefit them. I am just one of many who left the ECE profession for a better life. If we want to stop the mass turnover, we need to take better care of our teachers, especially since our clients aged birth-5 are so vulnerable. We dump so many resources into k-12, yet leave our birth-5 classrooms out to dry. If we don't make any changes, we will continue to see overworked, underpaid employees ditching the profession.