

My name is Lauren Halpin and I have been the Director of a School Readiness program at WCSU in Danbury for the past 6 years. I have a Master's in Teaching and meet the NAEYC qualifications for an Administrator at an accredited program. All of our full-time teachers have Bachelor's Degrees in Child Development. I am writing in support of S.B. No. 931, S.B. 935, and S.B. No. 937.

I am proud that the State of Connecticut has the highest number of young children enrolled in an early childhood program, according to data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2018 Kids Count book. Yale professor Edward Zigler, a leader in early childhood, believes that one of the critical components of a quality preschool program is having knowledgeable and well-qualified teachers. With children attending our program for an average of 50 hours a week, the most important factor in promoting meaningful learning are the relationships that teachers build with the children in their care.

I am growing tired of being told that I can appease my teachers by giving them donuts on a Friday once a month rather than the compensation that they deserve. \$24,240 is the median salary for Preschool teachers in Danbury with a Bachelor's degree. In order to afford rent for a two-bedroom home in Danbury, a person needs to earn \$51,799. As an administrator, it is growing more and more challenging to provide my teaching faculty with an annual COLA while at the same time keeping the costs at an affordable rate for working families. In no other field that I know of is it acceptable to tell an educator with a Bachelor's degree that they will be paid below a living wage. 40% of Early Childhood Educators are women of color and our field is almost exclusively comprised of women, according to the 2018 Childhood Workforce Index from the University of California at Berkely. Please do your part in ending discriminatory compensation practices that serve as a deterrent to professionals who choose to enter the field of Early Childhood Education by voting in support of S.B. No. 931, S.B. 935, and S.B. No. 937.

Thank you for considering my testimony.