

**Testimony regarding: S.B. No. 937 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN
FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS**

Submitted By:
Marie Russell

Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Marie Russell, and I live in Wallingford.

I am honored to be presenting testimony on the issue of S.B. No. 937 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

This is an issue that is very important to me. As the Program Chair of Child Studies at Post University, I have the pleasure of teaching students who are pursuing the Bachelors in Child Studies and the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. Over the nine years that I have been teaching at Post, I have witnessed and heard the challenges and fears that weigh on students as they acquire debt in the process of obtaining the necessary credentials and essential skills required of early childhood educators.

In the thirty plus years that I have been in the field as a certified teacher and administrator in public and private schools in Connecticut, I have taught alongside dedicated individuals working with preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, undergraduate and graduate students. I have seen colleagues on all levels give their hearts to their students. Teachers of our youngest children are just as dedicated and need to be just as skillful as their colleagues who teach upper levels, yet the compensation for the work of early childhood educators is entirely non-equitable.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut's young children, and requires immediate action. If the Loan Forgiveness Bill for Early Childhood Educators is enacted, our dedicated and highly qualified students and graduates will be able to enter and remain in this field, thereby serving Connecticut children and families at the high level that they need and deserve.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about S.B. No. 937 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS. Thank you for your consideration.