Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Steffi Martinez and I am the owner of a family child care home in Waterbury where I serve six families. I am also the Regional Vice President of my Union, CSEA SEIU Local 200, and a Delegate to our Executive Council.

Now that I have introduced myself, I would like to ask all of you 3 questions that you could answer by raising your hands.

1) How many of you know how to write and read?

2) How many of you learned how to write and read past the age of 18?

3) How many of you learned how to write and read between the ages of 3 to 7? (expect mostly everyone to raise their hand here).

By answering these simple questions, you have demonstrated how essential is the work that I perform as a child care provider. You demonstrate how important is education in the early stages of a child. A child's brain develops 80% in the first three years of life. These are the years where as child care providers, we are able to make a great impact on a child's life. So why not invest in their education now, than doing it later?

Again, we are early childhood educators that operate from a homelike setting; one that is sought by the majority of parents because of the individualization that we can provide to their children, and because it is proven that children learn better when there is a smaller teacher to student ratio. We are also located right in your neighborhood.

While I recognize that center based early childhood teachers do not make a living wage in Connecticut, I hear of more and more home based providers question whether or not...
we can continue to keep our childcares open, with the low pay rates and instability of the Care4Kids program. We can help fill the need for more infant slots, but in order for us to provide these children the quality education that they deserve, we need to be able to stay in business. Care4Kids’ rates family childcare rates have not changed since 2017 and the most that the program pays for an infant in my area is still less than $6. an hour for full–time care. We must be part of the equation. I believe that if a football or tennis player can receive an increase in their paycheck to entertain the public, I believe that we as child care providers deserve a rate increase to educate children, the ones that hold the future of our nation.

Thank you for listening to me today.