Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Rep. Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Michele Eathorne, and I live in New Britain.

I am honored to be presenting testimony on the issue of S.B. No. 932 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.

This is an issue that is very important to me. Not only am I a resident of New Britain but I am an early childhood educator working in New Britain, as well. I have been an early childhood educator for over 20 years. I received my Associate's Degree in ECE in 1988. I returned back to school for my Bachelor degree in Child Study from 2007 and graduating in 2011. I would not of been able to afford college though if I had not been part of the Women in Transition program through Charter Oak State College, as I was a single mother and struggling on a preschool teacher's wage trying to make ends meet at times and trying to better myself, so I could increase my pay wage.

Due to the increasingly required teaching qualifications over the past 20 years in the field of Early Childhood and regulations mandated by the state regarding specialized teacher qualifications, the volume of work required for intentional teaching and the professional development teachers require, compensation should be on par with Kindergarten/Elementary compensation currently in CT.

This is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut’s young children, and requires immediate action. Teachers starting off in the field would be more apt to continue their education in Early Childhood rather than leave the field. Retention of teachers would increase, as well as, a wider pool of qualified teachers to choose from. Teacher job satisfaction would increase with reduced stress of struggling to make their wage stretch. Preschool teachers would feel appreciated being seen as valued educators and professionals, thereby, better outcomes for the children. Currently, we have had many teachers leave the field and its harder to find teachers with the qualifications required.
I appreciate the opportunity to testify about S.B. No. 932 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS. Thank you for your consideration.