Testimony regarding: S.B. No. 935 AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE

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I am honored to be presenting testimony on the issue of S.B. No. 935 AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE.

This is an issue that is extremely important to me. I have worked as the School Readiness Coordinator for the past 3 years in Middletown. Prior to this role, I was a teacher in Middletown for 19 years, 10 of these years was teaching Kindergarten. Leaving the Kindergarten classroom has opened my eyes to the many equity issues we face in Connecticut and how desperately our system needs to be changed. It was always disheartening to see my students enter kindergarten with a huge gap socially, emotionally and academically. Some children were reading books, others were far from available to learn. My dream in this role has been to help close the preparation gap, which is the solution to our large achievement gap in Connecticut. Our system is operating in archaic times and hasn't caught up with the research now available about brain development and the importance of high quality, accessible preschool and child care programs. We cannot do this without fair wages for our early childhood education teachers. These teachers truly have, what I believe, to be the most important job on the planet. Our future and planet depends on this change.

I would like to address teacher stress and the impact their stress has on their lives, as well as the lives of their students. Every day I talk to a dedicated early childhood teacher who is underpaid, over worked and stressed. They don't have enough money to pay their basic bills and can't live in a way that allows them to feel any sense of peace. I am personally responsible for much of our early childhood educator's professional development and it's a favorite part of my job. However, many can't attend evening sessions because they don't get paid and have to work a second job to make ends meet. Then when I try to schedule trainings during prep or lunch hours, we often have to cancel because there's no coverage. This lack of coverage is from people calling out, people resigning or being asked to leave, etc. Children also suffer desperately with this high staff turnover, specifically due to attachment theory. We know that children's brains develop when a child is in a secure safe setting with a trusted caregiver. Neuroscience tells us this. Relationships take time but we aren't giving time for relationships to develop when adults come and go. This all has a ripple effect on centers, children and families.

Paying teacher a fair wage is an issue that will impact the educational well-being and future of Connecticut’s young children, and requires immediate action. With a better wage for teachers, we would attract higher quality, dedicated teachers to this most important field of work. Quality, qualified, happy teachers, make the world a happier place!
I appreciate the opportunity to testify about S.B. No. 935 AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE. Thank you for your consideration.