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Cortney Skinner
Teacher's Aide, TEAM Inc.

**An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related to Covid-19, Personal Protective
Equipment and Other Staffing Matters, HB6595 and SB 1002**

Committee on Labor and Public Employees
March 11, 2021

My name is Cortney Skinner. Thank you for hearing my testimony. Currently I'm a teacher's aide at TEAM Inc, an early childhood program, though prior to that I was an assistant teacher. I have been a part of early childhood for almost 6 years. In my testimony, I'd like to support the reason why early childhood educators, including family support staff, are more than deserving of hazard pay, given the changes of the classroom environment since COVID-19.

The dynamic of the classroom has changed tremendously due to COVID-19. Teachers are risking their lives daily to care for children within the community, while aides like me are doing our best to maintain a safe and clean environment where these children can still thrive and reach their potential. We are tasked with providing a safe environment by downsizing the classroom – which means removing toys and other materials -- to eliminate cross contamination with germs from the children, while also keeping it comfortable and maintaining developmentally appropriate practices.

As you can imagine, it's a difficult balance, and it always comes with risks. Children get sick, or they come from homes where others are sick. We sanitize everything, but that means we are exposed to everything.

The Hazard pay included in the bill concerning labor issues related to COVID would make teachers feel recognized and appreciated. We come to work every day to provide a difference for these children and future leaders. We are putting our life in jeopardy in doing so, and we are all worthy of being recognized and included as essential workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.