

Stephanie Wheelock

S.316

4/4/14

My name is Stephanie Wheelock and I am a registered home provider in Rutland City. I currently have one Star and am a Specialized Care Provider. I participate in Vermont Birth to Three program and have been active in my support of forming my union for the past four years.

During this time in my professional career my experience has given me many opportunities to connect with my colleagues about the issues that we face. At different times during this process I have connected differently to the various issues - sometimes being more passionate about certain topics than others. The topic I want to address constantly and I find most profound to is the true lack of respect for the valuable work that we do.

This last week my children and I joined a group of families in the Governor's Chambers to celebrate the kick off for the Month of the Military child. I was filled with pride to watch them be part of something that was honoring not only my husband and his sacrifice for his family and country, but honoring the sacrifice that my children make. I watched this beautiful interaction take place wondering if the warm response and deep respect that I felt that day would ever be closely reflected toward the important work that early educators do every day.

We know that the turnover rate among early educators is around 40%. This is because of both the lack of financial support and very often by the consistent lack of respect. I have continued to grow and evolve in my profession. It is now time to have the decision makers also grow and work collectively with us so that together, we can make a brighter future for the children and families we serve. I ask you to pass S.316 and allow providers the right to choose for themselves. In doing so you will send a clear message to Early Educators that you respect them enough to make their own decision.