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Testimony to House Education Committee
March 29, 2018

I am speaking in support of the Agency of Education oversight in the new language in the pre-kindergarten piece of the S. 257.

Since this is an education law, it makes sense to me, as a former teacher, and now as a professional consulting in both public and private programs, that the AOE has sole oversight of UPK.

There is longstanding debate within the early care and education community as to what is care and what is education. While it is true that education can happen at any time, for any child within any routine, there is a difference between the time you are being intentional with your teaching and when you are teaching incidentally. I would argue, that intentional teaching time is what Act 166 was actually addressing at its core. In this regard, AOE oversight makes sense, as they are the body that takes the lead in education in Vermont.

Public Prek is different than private childcare. Pre K Programs are currently required to align their curriculum to the VELS which supports their intentional teaching practices. Then, they use Teaching Strategies Gold as a full developmental assessment to see how children progress comprehensively in all areas.

When Vermont Early Learning Standards is used to support curriculum, and Social and Emotional development is included for data collection that will also connect to how we are supporting children who need trauma informed practices. I have been training Early Education professionals on both TS GOLD and earlyMTSS social and emotional practices, and I have seen how these are supporting our youngest and most vulnerable students. In programs that have received coaching and are using earlyMTSS social emotional practices, I have also seen their inclusive practices for all children increase.

I also think that the way PreK hours are funded in this bill are supportive of practice in the field. For instance, the first 10 hours is paid for through the education fund to private and public providers. In this new iteration, there is also support for additional teaching hours that public school programs can access through ADM. Private providers already charge families for care beyond 10 hours. This brings equity to the public and private providers. I worked in a Prek classroom that ran 12 hours a week, yet we were only able to count the children for ADM for the 10 under Vermont's Prek law. This new wording will support and sustain the good work happening in public programs.

Another change that supports high quality service delivery within the law is requiring at least 4 STARS for private programs. It was nice to see agreement that 3 STAR programs may not yet be at the level of quality that supports all of the outcomes we want to see from universal preK education.

In closing, I wholly support the committee's efforts and those of representative Sharpe, to consider moving this bill forward. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my perspective with you.