

# Otter Creek Child Center

“Celebrating 35 years of helping children discover their love for learning”

March 1, 2019

Dear House Appropriates Committee,

My name is Kelsey Coleman and I work at Otter Creek Child Center in Middlebury, VT and live in Lincoln. At Otter Creek, we take care of children between the ages of six weeks and five years old. I have been working at Otter Creek for a little over three years and have gained so much in a short amount of time because of T.E.A.C.H.

I applied at Otter Creek to become a sub with hopes of becoming a teacher one day but didn't know how I would be able to afford to go to college. When a full time spot opened up, I was pleased to find out that the job offer went to me and that there was a chance of me being able to get a higher education. I was informed that a scholarship program called T.E.A.C.H. would help pay for me to get my associates degree in early childhood education. Since then, I have been going to college while working full time and also becoming a high school coach. The demands of my job, course work, and being present everyday at practice was a lot but because of my three hours of paid release time, I was able to manage all the chaos effectively and still earn over a 3.5 GPA.

I will be receiving my associates degree in about two years, but am unsure of how I will pursue obtaining my bachelor degree in early childhood education. At this time, there is currently no T.E.A.C.H. scholarship to support teachers pursuing a bachelor degree and with my current rate of pay and monthly expenses, college tuition will not be possible. It would be of great help for aspiring teachers like me for T.E.A.C.H. to have the ability to expand their scholarship models to include a B.A. track.

That is why I'm asking you to support the ask of 1.2 million dollars for the T.E.A.C.H. program which includes expanding T.E.A.C.H. with a Bachelor degree model to ensure the workforce has a pathway from associates to bachelors to licensure. Minimally, a \$550,000 appropriation for T.E.A.C.H. in the FY20 budget would sustain the current Apprenticeship, Associates and Teacher Licensure programs.

Thank you for listening to my story and for supporting early childhood educators across the state.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Coleman  
Toddler Teacher  
Otter Creek Child Center

