

Theresa Utton-Jerman

From: Shelley Sayward <Shelley.Sayward@casella.com>
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 11:36 AM
To: Theresa Utton-Jerman
Subject: Letter of Interest - High Quality Child Care

Good morning,

My name is Shelley Sayward, and I am a member of the management team at Casella Waste Systems, Inc. I would like to share my thoughts in an effort to ensure that investments in high-quality child care for working families are a priority in the FY 2021 State Budget.

- Casella has instituted a child care scholarship program to assist our young workforce with their child care expenses.
- I have seen first-hand how high-quality child care acts as a fundamental support for our workforce. It allows parents to accept work and show up ready to work.
- When child care breaks down, our workforce breaks down. A lack of high-quality child care directly impacts our ability to recruit and retain a productive workforce.
- I believe that strategic investments in early care and learning can transform Vermont's economy and the well-being for all Vermonters.
- Affordable, accessible, high-quality child care ensures that children, VT's future workforce, are prepared for school and life's adventures; parents know their kids are safe and can make the best choices for their families and careers; and communities thrive as VT's workforce and economy prospers.
- Yet we know that 77% of VT infants and toddlers likely to need care don't have access to high-quality regulated child-care.
- This is due in part to a serious shortage of early childhood educators.
- Early childhood educators can barely make ends meet, earning a median annual wage of approximately \$29,430, often without benefits.
- Consider that the median annual wage for a kindergarten teacher is about twice that amount. This pay disparity makes it extremely difficult for early childhood educators to stay in the field.
- We also know that parents are spending up to 30% of their income on child care and can't afford to pay more.
- Vermont's aging workforce coupled with our low unemployment rate makes it crucial that we invest in strategies that will attract young people to Vermont, allow them to stay here and enter the workforce.
- Supporting high-quality child care is recognized as a highly effective strategy to incent economic development.
- I urge you to support increased investments in early childhood education by:
 - Increasing financial supports to families to make high-quality child care affordable to all Vermonters who want it;
 - Investing in Vermont's T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program;
 - Launching a student loan repayment support program for early childhood educators; and
 - Creating a temporary wage support program for early childhood educators.

Thank you.

Shelley E. Sayward
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