

My name is Alora Zargo. I am from Brookline, Vermont, and I'm a freshman at the University of Vermont. Before college I attended the Early Childhood Education program at the Windham Regional Career Center in Brattleboro, and after I completed my required coursework, I earned more college credit and job experience as a Youth Apprentice. I graduated high school qualified for an ECE I license. Programs like the one at Windham Regional Career Center make this a real career and I think our state should support more early career opportunity pathways. An early childhood educator profession gives me a vision for my career path, and a clear career path gives me a reason to stay in Vermont.

When I first started this path in high school, I thought working in early childhood education would be fun, but I didn't fully understand how much responsibility it involved. I think a lot of people think it's an easy job. Or a pit stop job, on their way to something else. They think, you're just playing with little kids, I could do that. Well, I've learned that early childhood education is much more than just playing. It's about building relationships, making decisions based on child development, communicating with families, and showing up prepared to support every child in your care. It's also being someone a child trusts every single day. So it takes a lot of work to make all that play look so easy.

If you have to have a license to work with young children, it will help ensure that the people doing the work are serious about it and have the knowledge they need to succeed, and to help children succeed. I've already seen people come and go from centers I work in, because they weren't prepared for the challenges of the job. I want to do my best, I want to work in a system that supports me for doing my best, and I want to work alongside other people who want to do their best.

Licensure will encourage those who are passionate about this work to commit to it as a career, which will ultimately reduce turnover and ensure that children are cared for by dedicated, knowledgeable professionals.

If you look at it like a career, there are a lot of ways to get in the door. I'm more than halfway to ECE II qualifications. I have a lot of college credits and a clear vision of my future. I plan to continue my education. I am eventually going to be getting my masters degree, already almost done with my first year of my bachelor's at the University of Vermont. I can see myself continuing to be an advocate for the future of this field, helping future early childhood educators find their passion, just as my incredibly teacher Kim

Freeman did for me at the Windham Regional Career Center. My program connected school, college credit, and real work experience in a way that made this path feel real and achievable for me.

Licensure creates a pathway for students like me to envision a lifelong career in early childhood education. It's not just a pit stop; it's a meaningful, rewarding profession. The work we do has a real impact on children's lives in everyday moments, and that's why it matters who is doing it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and perspective.

Looking forward to sharing,

Alora