

Good morning everyone. For the record, I am Shannon Edmonds-Folsom, the Child Care Manager for Jay Peak Resort.

I'm humbled to be invited to this committee to testify for S.206. It feels especially meaningful since I grew up in a military family. Both of my parents served in the Army and my father retired in 2006 as a major after serving for 25 years. It's entirely because of my father's military career that my family was relocated to Vermont in 1997, and it was my Mom's decision to keep my brother and me in Vermont in no small part because of conversations with other service members stationed here that reassured her about the high quality of Vermont's public education.

As for my current role in early childhood education, I am the Child Care Manager for Jay Peak Resort. In licensing terms, I am the program director of our licensed center based child care and preschool program, which also offers non-recurring services. Our program, Jay Peak Child Care, exists in the unique space insofar that it is a private business operated by Jay Peak Resort, but benefits from CCFAP funding and UPK Act 166 funding, which comes from the State and from the public school system. I am also the AOE licensed teacher for our Universal PreK program with a Birth through PreK endorsement. This means that I split my time between administrative side of the department, and also still spend time directly in the classroom with children. I do support S.206, and testified my support for the bill at the Senate Committee for Health and Welfare back in January.

Briefly, here are my reasons for supporting S.206:

- Provides a clear pathway to attract and retain new members to the ECE field
- Provides further accountability for ECE professionals, which generates trust and security for the families we serve
- Provides a clearer structure for employers to incentivize better compensation for ECEs
- Offers employers a clearer sense of qualifications and professional commitment to the ECE field when recruiting staff
- As far as I understand, there is still a transition time built in to last over several years to allow existing providers to gain licensure, while also providing inroads for new recruitment directly into the new system. There is also room for, and a need for, current providers to offer their knowledge and experience and bridge the best parts of our current practices to this new structure.
- Provides an opportunity to further the conversation about the false divide between "care" and "education" and destigmatize the ECE field as "less than" the public education system.

In conclusion, I support S. 206 because it is an opportunity to take an actionable step towards stabilizing the early childhood education career field. Further, it is a systemic change that reflects Vermont's evolving values in prioritizing accessible high quality care and education for children and families. Thank you all for your time and consideration, and I'd like to offer any remaining time for answering any questions from the committee.

Please let me know if there's anything further you need from me!

Gratefully,

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