

Testimony on S.206

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.206.

I would like to begin by sharing my journey with advocacy and how it has shaped my perspective on this legislation.

Several years ago, Let's Grow Kids came to my Vermont Early Childhood Network to gather feedback on how the workforce might receive the idea of professionalizing early childhood education. My network supported this direction, but we also had concerns.

I do not hold a college degree, and I was deeply concerned about being pushed out of a profession I had dedicated over 25 years to. Because of that concern, I applied to serve on VTAEYC's Task Force to Professionalize the Early Childhood Education Field. I was honored to be selected and served from 2019 through 2025.

When I began this work, I felt a strong responsibility to represent educators across Vermont—especially home-based educators—and to ensure that no one felt excluded. I came prepared to advocate and, when necessary, push back.

Over time, my understanding evolved.

I came to see that professionalizing this field is not only about respect and fair compensation—it is also about protecting children.

There have been situations where harm has occurred in regulated programs, yet accountability has rested with the program rather than the individual. In those cases, individuals may leave one program and be hired by another, without a mechanism to prevent repeated harm. Individual licensure addresses this gap by ensuring accountability follows the educator.

I have been following S.206 closely and would like to address concerns that this proposal may lead to overregulation.

From my perspective, this is not about overregulation. While compliance systems can feel burdensome, the move toward individual licensure is both reasonable and necessary. Educators working with young children carry significant responsibility, and the state must have the ability to act when harm occurs.

In addition to my work in Vermont, I have participated in national conversations through Home Grown, which supports home-based child care providers across the country. As part of a

licensing workgroup, I engaged with educators from multiple states. A consistent message emerged: educators believe that regulation—when thoughtfully designed—is appropriate and necessary for our profession.

I also want to be clear about something that mattered deeply to me when I first began this work—and still does today.

There must be a place in this profession for current and future educators, regardless of educational background.

I believe S.206 reflects that balance. It creates a pathway forward that both protects children and respects the existing workforce, including experienced educators who may not hold formal degrees but bring deep knowledge and commitment to their work.

I come before you today in full support of S.206 because I believe it reflects years of thoughtful discussion, collaboration, and learning. It strengthens accountability, supports professionalism, and helps ensure a safer, more respected early childhood system for everyone involved.

At the end of the day, this is about ensuring that every child in Vermont is safe, supported, and cared for by professionals who are both valued and accountable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.