

My name is Kim Freeman, and I teach aspiring early childhood educators at Windham Regional Career Center in Brattleboro. I've worked in many roles and settings: infant-toddler teacher, preschool teacher, center director, and home-based early childhood education owner-operator.

I'm writing to urge you to not reallocate Act 76 funding for purposes unrelated to early childhood education. That funding is a promise for our children and families today, our early childhood educators, our programs, and our future. I believe that every child deserves high-quality early childhood education, and that this begins with a well-prepared educator. Act 76 funding opened the opportunity to expand high-quality early childhood education to every student, and now with the recommendations of the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) to license early childhood educators, we have the opportunity to ensure every child is taught by well-prepared educators.

This system is so well thought through and, finally, adequately funded. Taking funding away now undermines our future greatness. I see this future greatness every day, in my students. They're graduating high school qualified for licensure under the OPR's recommendations. They are not afraid of enrolling in coursework or taking part in licensure requirements: they want to learn, and they're proud of their expertise. After graduation, they take advantage of grants and scholarships and continue on to their associate and bachelor's degrees. They are able to work and take courses without accruing student debt.

They are young, so the investments of Act 76 have already had a big impact in jumpstarting the careers they believe in, and leave high school qualified for. These funds are starting to change a broken system to the one we dreamed of when we passed this law. Don't stop this progress. Invest these funds in our children, families, and in our future early childhood education workforce. Thank you.

Kim Freeman M.Ed.