

My name is Riley McFaun and I am an early childhood educator based in South Burlington. I chose to be an early educator because I want to be part of a positive difference in the lives of students and families. I believe each and every human has the right to a strong start and equal chance in life. The way to ensure this is through high quality early learning opportunities that meet the needs of the child and the family. The essential learning that happens from birth to age 5 every day sets children up for not just school, but for life. It is a foundation for who they become. I want to be part of a community raising capable, caring and competent humans!

The child care crisis became my own challenge when I considered having my own family and how unaffordable child care is in Vermont - both as a parent paying for it, and as an educator earning a living in it. Of the cohort of Early Childhood Educators I went to UVM with, I am one of only four who stayed in Vermont.

The long-term, sustainable public investment in Vermont's child care system through Act 76 makes it so I can see a future for myself here, building a career in early childhood education, and raising a family. I have already seen firsthand the benefits of readiness grants, higher Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) reimbursement rates to programs, and capacity and quality incentives that help bolster child care staffing and increase programs' capacity to serve more children.

If we keep Act 76 funding where it belongs, supporting children and families, then solving our state's child care crisis is within our reach. We're already seeing child care programs increase staff compensation and benefits, improve and expand their facilities, and create new child care slots, ALL because of Act 76. The investment we are making will create caring, capable, community members ready to enter the workforce, leading to economic growth in the state and high quality educator retention. We can not stop now! And we have the opportunity, with H.182, to create a future where every child can benefit from well-prepared, accountable early childhood educators, who are themselves supported as members of a recognized profession. This is the vision that keeps me and others like me in our state. Preserve Act 76 funding, and create a future that works for children, families, educators, and our state. Thank you!