

My name is Trisha Scharf, and I am the owner and executive director of Children Unlimited, a private early childhood education program in Williston.

I urge you to keep Act 76 funding where it belongs, invested in the wellbeing of young children and families, and in the early childhood education that strengthens our communities and our economies. In the short amount of time since Act 76 was enacted, we have been able to increase wages and add a simple IRA with 3% company match. This is an enormous tool for teacher retention and recruitment.

My program's philosophy is that trusting relationships are the catalyst for children's growth and development. That relies on our ability to retain our excellent teaching staff. As early childhood educators, we are proud of our dedication, education, and experience. I believe every child in Vermont should have access to well-prepared early childhood educators who show up every day ready to help children discover the joy of learning. This session, our legislature has the opportunity to honor our early childhood education workforce as professionals licensed under the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR). This is the kind of system change that will move us closer to delivering on the initial promise of Act 76: access, equity, and quality for all children and families.

Please ensure Act 76 funding is dedicated to making quality programs affordable for families and to investing in our workforce, and in our future as a state. Thank you.

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