

Dear Senators,

My name is Courtney Sullivan, and I live in Burlington. I am currently a student working towards my bachelor's degree in early childhood education at UVM. I'm writing to share with you my perspective about how licensure in the Early Childhood Education field affects me.

Early childhood educators play a critical role in shaping the development of future generations, yet historically, they have not been compensated or recognized in the same way as other professionals. The workforce has advocated for early childhood education to be recognized as a profession to elevate the status and value of those who teach young children.

The push for professional licensure ensures that educators are equipped with the necessary training, knowledge, and skills to support children's learning and development. A professional licensure will also reduce turnover rates and provide stability to both children and families, since educators will be prepared for the job. With well-trained professionals in place, children will receive the support and educational experiences they need in their critical early years, setting them up for success.

I have experience working in the early childhood field, both as a student teacher and a teacher's assistant. I have worked with many teachers in the field who have no license to teach in early childhood, and those classrooms are very difficult to work in. It is hard to watch children receive less support and educational experiences as other children because their teacher doesn't know the best practices and methods of teaching. Often times, children in those environments also can have more intense behaviors because their teacher doesn't know how to manage a classroom of young children. It is especially disheartening to watch as I work towards my license in early childhood education, since I know the different kinds of supports students need and how to create a positive classroom community that supports all learners.

I know the hard work, dedication, and emotion that licensed early childhood educators put into their work each day. Therefore, I want early childhood education to be recognized as a profession. This brings us one step closer to being adequately compensated and recognized for the hard work we do. Thank you for listening to me and I hope that sharing my experience was helpful.

Best,
Courtney Sullivan