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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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Chair Collamore and Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations:

On behalf of the Greater Burlington YMCA, we write in general support and excitement for S.119, which recognizes the Early Childhood Education profession. This classification is well deserved given the complexities of the safe, quality care that they are expected to deliver for our children and their families.

We were also excited that you modified the bill to include degrees in a “related field”, as we were concerned that without that inclusion, we would have lost 80% of our current early childhood teachers. These teachers indicated that, due to their own parenting demands and their need to work full time, they would not be willing or able to return to college to get an Early Childhood Education degree, as was originally required in this bill. They would ultimately have left the field rather than returned to school.

While we do look forward to the eventual passing of S.119, we respectfully ask the committee to consider two additional changes.

First, we ask the committee to clarify “related fields” to ensure that current teachers’ degrees would still qualify without additional college courses. This would help ensure that the passage of S.119 wouldn’t accidentally shrink the workforce.

Second, we strongly encourage the committee to add study language that provides for the thorough examination of the size of the workforce needed for the Early Childhood profession. Relative to the number of students graduating high school and pursuing college degrees in Vermont, as well as given the staffing shortage across most professions in Vermont, the study would examine questions such as: will a disproportionate number of students pursuing college degrees need a degree in Early Childhood or related field to fill the Early Childhood staffing need? Could there be a non-college pathway to achieve the same quality care that would simultaneously expand the workforce to a more proportionate number?

Thank you for considering these requests while prioritizing our children and the workforce that support them.

Sincerely,

Dan Smith

President & CEO

The Greater Burlington YMCA