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Brunswick  
LD 210

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Darcey Richardson. I am a toddler teacher and live in Brunswick.

I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. I have been a childcare provider for many years and I oppose cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program for several reasons.

The early childhood field is in need of quality childcare providers. I've worked in an early learning program since 2011 and over the years, I have seen so much staff turn-over. Untrained people enter the field thinking it will be an easy job and they don't realize the stress and demands that are involved. In addition, the early childhood field has always had low wages even though the first years of life are so important. We should be putting more money and support into this field, not less.

The low wages, the high stress level and the growing demands are why many of my co-teachers have left the field. Many of them may have liked to stay in the early childhood field, but they need to pay the bills. They have their own families to support. The wage supplement program has helped me support my family. With the growing prices of services, food and other goods, we need the boost in our wages just to stay afloat and provide for our own children.

The wage supplement program has also encouraged some of us to stay in the field longer. Part of quality childcare is continuity of the teachers. Seeing the same people everyday helps children feel safe and build relationships. When a child knows he or she can depend on the same people while they are away from home, it gives them the freedom to explore and learn. It also gives parents peace of mind knowing that their children are well cared for by people they have come to know. If cuts are made to the wage supplement program, we will lose even more educators without anyone to replace them. In addition, families will continue to lose options for childcare if there are minimal staff.

We need to be compensated fairly for the important work that we do. The things we do now will have an impact on our children's futures so we need to make the investment.