

Testimony in support of LD 1955, An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability

Hazel Willow
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Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Hazel Willow, and I am a mother, Domestic Abuse survivor and former Early Childhood Educator. I am here to testify in support of LD 1955.

In the fall of 2013, while in my second year of teaching English as a Second Language in Seoul, South Korea I met and fell in love with an American soldier. When his PCS orders sent him to Fort Riley in Kansas I joined him. I was hired as a Child Development Specialist on base where it was one of the great honors of my life to provide high quality affordable child care to our country's service members.

The Department of Defense, as our employer, required that every center and Early Childhood Educator be accredited in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standard. It was in my training that I learned about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their lifelong mental health and/or chronic health consequences.

One fact I learned has never ceased to amaze me. It is the fact that just ***one consistent, connected*** caregiver can remediate almost all the negative outcomes of ACEs. Just one. A ***singular consistent, connected*** caregiver. That is the power that Early Childhood Educators have.

Wielding a power that mighty requires an immense amount of energy both mentally and physically. Educators can't show up in this way when their needs aren't met. They can't meet their needs living on low wages that aren't commensurate with their contribution. A contribution that is critical for domestic abuse survivors who often experience child care sabotage as a form of financial abuse. I've seen it, I've lived it. I know how important it is to fund childcare, and I would urge the committee to continue building on the good work you've done in recent years by passing LD 1955.