

1. Name:

Sarah Gautie-Ferreira

2. Email:

3. Town *

Mansfield

4. I am a: *

Please select at most 2

☒ Parent

☐ Childcare Provider

☒ Early Childhood Educator

☐ Community Organization

☐ Employer

☐ Advocate

☐ Other

5. Type or paste your Testimony here: *

My name is Sarah Gautie-Ferreira and I am a resident of Mansfield, CT. I am a 44-year-old single mother with a 12-year-old son. I have been working with young children for well over two decades, with extensive experience caring specifically for infants and toddlers. Not only do I have over 20 years of professional experience, I also have an associate's degree in early childhood education, and I have recently obtained my International Montessori Teaching Diploma with the North American Montessori Center. I am currently working as a Lead Toddler Guide at a small, non-profit Montessori School in Mansfield Center, CT.

When my son was born in 2013 I had to make the decision to either send him to daycare so that I could continue working or stay home with him.

Ultimately my then husband and I agreed that it would not make sense financially to send my son to daycare and to pay for daycare, because the money that I made working with infants and toddlers would be spent on paying for his childcare. Why would I pay someone else to watch my son while I took care of other people's children?

Eventually, when my son was old enough to attend preschool, I went back to work part time taking care of infants and toddlers. We thought it was necessary for my son to learn social skills and I needed to start making my own money again and to feel like I was part of the community again.

The money that I made working part time with infants and toddlers paid for my son to attend preschool part time. It was a loss financially.

A couple of years later my husband and I divorced, and I was required to work full time again.

I got a job at a daycare center in Vernon, CT taking care of infants and toddlers, and I was paid just over minimum wage. I was struggling to pay rent and utility bills, and a friend mentioned that I should apply for Snap benefits. I have never used Snap benefits before and at first, I was against using them because I did not want to take away benefits from "someone who might really need them". It turns out I REALLY needed them. I applied for Snap and Husky and I qualified for both Snap benefits and Husky Health Insurance. I also qualified for heat benefits during the winter, and a lower rate for my cell phone bill. Having those benefits helped me tremendously and took away so much stress, as I was able to pay for rent and utilities with my minimum wage paycheck and did not have to worry about doctor's visits, bills pertaining to health issues, putting oil in the furnace, or providing food for my son.

According to the state of CT I was considered below poverty level even while working a full-time job with a college degree and two decades of professional experience!!!

To be paid minimum wage or just over minimum wage in the childcare profession is typical and a well-known fact among childcare providers. I have known this fact personally for decades. The majority of us teachers come with years of experience, college degrees, a true and genuine passion for caring for young children, and countless hours of various training courses. We are expected to live our lives as professional people with college degrees, countless hours of various training courses including but not limited to Cpr/First Aid Certification, Medication Administration Certification, SIDS prevention training, Mandated Reporter training, and ongoing courses pertaining to early childhood education and development.

We are expected to leave our own family to go to work full time, while keeping other people's young children clean, healthy, ALIVE, fed, stimulated academically, nurtured, safe, and happy. We are expected to have all of the bells and whistles, and to care for other people's most cherished possessions, and yet we can't afford to feed our own children. This is a big reason why daycares have a high turn-over rate. This is why schools have a hard time keeping teachers.

Something has to change. Teachers and childcare providers deserve better pay.

Thank you.