

Hello Chair Reynolds and Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf and members of the committee.

I first want to thank you for this opportunity to speak and share my experience.

My Name is Brenda Pena-Ayala, I live in Springfield and I am here to express my support for House Bill 2504.

In my experience, I was born here in the United States. For family reasons my parents and I left the U.S. when I was 6 years old. I then grew up in Mexico, graduated from college in Mexico with a degree in child development. When I moved back to the U.S. I was given the opportunity to work at the Relief Nursery since they recognized the value of my degree. Unfortunately in regards of the certification system, ORO, my degree and years of school are not recognized, and I am considered unqualified.

I started working in the Relief Nursery when I was very young. My parents are in Mexico and I have to cover for all of my own expenses. I find myself in hard position to go to back to school while also working full time, but unless there is recognition of my education in Mexico by the registry system, this is what I will need to do.

Please support House Bill 2405, so that early learning professionals like me can continue to support children and families and have our experience and education valued and recognized.

Thank you for your time today.