

February 7, 2025

To: Chair, Representative Hudson; House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Re: HB 3011; Relating to the Early Childhood Education Workforce Development Fund

From: Kendra Votava, MEd- Director of the Periwinkle Child Development Center located at Linn-Benton Community College

Representative Hudson,

I am writing in support of bill HB 3011. As the Director of an on-campus childcare center at Linn-Benton Community College, I have witnessed the impact that the Early Childhood Education practicum program has on the developing workforce.

As I am certain this committee is aware, early childhood education suffers from a lack of appropriately prepared staff members to serve children; leading to high turnover rates, staff that feel frustrated or burned out, pervasive challenging behaviors in children, and potential licensing issues, among other ominous consequences. Supporting our early childhood education programs at the college level can solve these issues by providing a well-educated and properly prepared workforce to the ECE field.

At Linn-Benton Community College, we have an on-campus early childhood education center that also functions as a lab school for our ECE adult students going into the field of early education. Practicum students work in our classrooms a minimum of three days every week during their practicum program. With this program, our childcare center supports adult students wishing to be part of the early childhood education community with real life experiences in preschool classrooms. Not only does this opportunity support the practicum students learning to be teachers, but it enhances the children's experience and offers the primary teaching team the opportunity to mentor the next generation of teachers- increasing the skillsets in all who are involved!

Appropriating funds to support early childhood education students who are learning to be the budding workforce, can only fortify the efforts to increase accessible and high-quality child care programs. While the first five years of a child's life are considered to be the most critical in their development, the recognition for the professionals who care for them is severely undervalued. Increased funding allows new teachers the opportunity to participate in this critical educational field, and child care centers the chance to provide necessary care to our youngest citizens.

Investing in on-campus centers is also critical to supporting the entire ECE system. LBCC was able to revitalize Periwinkle with the passage of a bond; allowing the center to remodel and reopen to the students and employees of LBCC, as well as the wider community. Without further investment in programs such as this, ECE training programs in colleges will falter, causing more shortages in an early childhood education field that is already unstable. I urge you to support HB 3011, as many of our early educators do.

Respectfully,

