To the Castleton and Hubbardston Select board members, Castleton Rec, Boys and Girls Club, and our local community members,

I would like to give a proper introduction of myself and my Early Education Programs:

I have been pursuing my passion for 20+ years while continuing to grow. Starting out as a small registered home-based program, expanding to a licensed home program, and now a center-based program with a VT 5 STAR accreditation rating and just received nomination for the **2022 Early Childhood Educator of the Year Award**presented by the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC) and sponsored by Let’s Grow Kids. This award recognizes excellence in the teaching of Vermont's young children aged birth to eight. The nomination is for providing outstanding early care and education to Vermont families within the last year. This was a bit of a surprise although I am extremely honored to be considered.

I have a true passion for what I do to offer a high-quality early education program to families in a world of uncertainties. Life is hard for many families trying to keep a balance of work and home life where it requires both parents to work typically outside of the home to have a basic life stability. Families are struggling more than ever to find quality, affordable childcare and early education. I know this may sound a bit silly and I know I am only one person but my passion is to provide what I can to make the world a better place especially for our children. My home town Castleton seems to be the perfect place to do so and meet these extreme needs of our community. I believe in providing and giving children a multitude of engaging activities and memorable life experiences. I could go on about my continued personal hopes, plans, and dreams although that would take up a great amount of time. Because there are several and I am already living many of them. I am sure that the Castleton Rec, community members and I have a very similar mind set when it comes to wanting more for our children. I have a great desire to make community connections to help support or provide activities within our community.

For an example, in 2020 during the pandemic I had posted on social media my plans for a community ice skating rink being developed on the property we owned on Sand Hill. I wanted to make use of this empty property in a world of anxiety and depression due to the pandemic. We had an empty horse barn we were going to heat for a place to warm up when needed. I had purchased this commercial size ice rink out of pocket and also bought the lumber to build and make it all happen. I had several community members comment and respond with interest of utilizing it along with community members offering to donation equipment, snacks, baked goods, hot coco, tea, and coffee. My husband, son, brother-in-law, and step dad work hours on end building this, we then had the Castleton Fire Department volunteer to come out and fill it. Sadly, we soon realized that even though the property looked level to the eye it unfortunately was not level. Leaving all the water pooling on one end. We attempted to fix it as I had already invested a great amount of money and time into it. Due to getting a late start on constructing this, the ground was to frozen to make this happen without much larger equipment. Although this attempt in providing something positive for our community ended up as an epic failure, the plus side is that we have all the materials and equipment and are now prepared for future years to come.

I honestly was not prepared when I was contacted the first week of May by the Castleton select board to discuss if there was any interest in the Castleton Village school for my expanding childcare and preschool program, at this time I had not had any interest. Although oddly enough that very same day I had received a vacate letter from the Town of West Haven where I have invested in a temporary location until we were able to relocate my expanded childcare program to our forever new location on Sand Hill Road here in Castleton.

I was invited to the scheduled town meeting on May 4th to discuss the possibilities of the CVS building. I came to this meeting open minded and interested in what the thoughts or plans were for our village school building, still not convinced this was going to be a solution to me for my ongoing struggles of trying to build a new childcare center during the Covid pandemic. At this time, I had never really had the opportunity to explore or even have an idea of what this CVS building consist of. The extreme need of high-quality childcare was overwhelming for myself. Having only 12 spots available to our local families and 18 families sharing those spots with an additional 26 families on a wait list now accommodating 30 families at our temporary location in West Haven with a vacate notice. Some of these families whom contacted me early on during pregnancy to secure a spot and the child being a year old before having any availability to accommodate these families’ needs.

I have an amazing amount of support from many stakeholders which I am beyond grateful for whom were hoping to be here tonight, unfortunately this is an extremely busy time of year for most with the end of the school year, sporting events, vacations, etc. along with receiving an email from one of my main stakeholders that her mother was in the final days of her life and she needed to be with her, which is completely understandable. I have received letters of support from my lenders and stakeholders that were not able to attend and these letters were emailed to the Castleton select board to review and share along with my updated business plan.

With that being said, I have recently been in contact with the grant committee of the Capital Investment Grant that I was awarded. After bringing them up to speed on the set backs of construction to move forward and now this new possibility, they are extremely supportive and would like to invest in the purchase of the CVS building to help make the much-needed high-quality childcare and preschool expansion in Castleton a reality. I am very thankful for their added support although this does add some pressure for a decision to be made quickly. I unfortunately will not have these funds available for any extended period of time. I am actually supposed to update them tomorrow after this meeting and they are looking to get a purchase price near the end of the month. I have Strick timelines I have to meet when accepting these funds that my program has been awarded. I also have a vacate letter in which I need to know how I am moving forward to relocate my program hopefully without much disruption to my existing families.

**Stakeholders’ concerns:**

Capital investment/improvements to a building that myself (Ms. Brannock) does not hold ownership of.

-The town of Castleton retaining ownership and having the ability and or responsibility to keep up with the VT strict rules and regulations in regards to childcare. If Ms. Brannock does not have ownership, then it would be up to the town to be responsible for the up keep, permitting, and standards for a licensed program to occupy space within a town owned building.

-Liabilities, stability, and timing

-Playground equipment/and the number of children using outdoor space at one time.

**Community and Program Benefits:**

Program Sustainability

A sustainable budget

Financial stability

Not selling anything we are providing a service to the community.

Contributes to the tax pool

Commercial size playground.

Staff expertise in curriculum and early education that have to meet professional requirements including finger printing and background checks.

Providing services to low to moderate incomed families as well as assisting with scholarship funding when available to make high-quality childcare affordable to all families.

VT State 5 STAR accredited program

UPK allowing for 10 per week of free preschool to families.

**Support from Brenda Metzler**

(LGK Community & Program Support Specialist)

If I were able to testify to the Castleton Select Board, I would tell them that we have full confidence in Ms. Brannock ability to operate a high-quality early childhood program that supports children and their families, enriches the community, prepares early childhood educators for the workforce, creates well-compensated jobs with benefits, brings people into town, supports the university and contributes to the tax base. Along with a strong and sustainable business plan. I would also detail the level of LGK support to date $120,000+ on going technical assistance and connections to other resources.

I am a for profit program although please note that the only difference between a for profit and non profit is I am the director and hold ownership where a non-profit organization has a board of directors, and is ran and owned by a committee.