February 28, 2018

Subcommittee on Child Care Access and Affordability

Re: Overview of Family Child Care Challenges/Issues

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham and I have been a Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 20 years, a board member of the state association Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN.org). I have worked over the past years on legislation that impacts Family Child Care Providers and have been engaged with DHS by attending most of all the stakeholder meetings that have been offered.

Thank you all for your dedication to this committee to address issues related to Child Care. This is a complicated topic with the variety of offerings for child care and the complexity of needs of families.

I believe that the most affordable and flexible child care offering is through Family Child Care and this area of child care needs your help.

I frequently am in conversation with providers who are struggling with the complexity of the system and the dehumanizing attitudes of ‘guilty then maybe kind of innocent’ which put targets on their backs and is emotionally and personally devastating. Others do not want to enter into this world of condemnation when the actions are not the ones needed to keep children safe.

Issues/challenges include:

* Rules and regulations which are fragmented in legislation, therefor they are difficult to locate and comprehend.
* Fragmented communication and understanding of expectation with a county delegated license. The communication between DHS, county licensors and providers (current and potential) is disjointed and with few checks and balances to accuracy.
  + County licensors implement licensing are often not accurate nor consistent.
  + DHS only knows what licensors are communicating and/or writing corrections orders on when providers ask for reconsideration or “ask the licensor”
  + DHS implemented in the fall of 2017 a much clearer method for the 2017 legislation and this has lead to a better understanding by providers on expectations.
* DHS over-reach of power and authority
  + Providers given Negative actions have a method of appeal which is complicated and expensive.
  + This appeal potentially brings them before an Administrative Law Judge whose ruling is a recommendation not a final ruling. Hence, providers who are trusting a judicial system and are proven ‘innocent’ often find themselves ruled guilty by DHS and have experienced not being able to retain their license or DHS places layers of conditions on the license which makes it demeaning and difficult to continue providing care.
  + Background checks are excluding providers due to family members or themselves having had situations in the past including juvenile events which have nothing to do with care and safety of children. This has prevented individuals from obtaining a FCC license or prevented them from keeping their license.

I am including the Public Policy Agenda that has been approved by MCCPIN. These major points are areas that we believe would offer both short and long-term change to the licensing issues providers are experiencing.

Thank you again for your time and efforts to improve the child care environment both for parents and providers.

Cyndi Cunningham

373 Idaho Ave W

St. Paul, MN 55117

651-470-4857