Good morning Chair Dean, members of the Committee,

My name is Tracy Stengel - I’m a licensed family child care provider from Mankato and the President of the Minnesota Association of Child Care Professionals (MACCP).

MACCP is a voluntary association of licensed family child care providers whose mission is to strengthen the family child care profession by advocating for policy improvements, offering additional support and services to providers, and by promoting family child care as an exceptional option for quality care and early childhood education.

MACCP supports House File 3436, a proposal to form a task force that we hope will address the many issues contributing to the high cost and shortage of child care across Minnesota.

When the Select Committee on Affordable Child Care held town hall listening sessions across Minnesota, they heard directly from parents struggling to find and afford child care. They also heard from providers struggling with the increasing demands of running a licensed family child care business including:

* Increased paperwork
* Increased training requirements with redundant material
* Ever changing regulation and changing interpretations of existing regulation
* Increased burden and requirements for the provider’s family members.
* Higher operating costs
* Increased liability, yet fewer options for liability and homeowners insurance
* An increasingly adversarial oversight process at times with the Department of Human Services and some County licensors
* Layer after layer of bureaucracy that can make getting an answer to even a simple question, or clarification on a rule or statute unnecessarily difficult.

These increasing demands have played a key role in the loss of thousands of childcare providers over the last decade. We can’t have affordable and accessible child care in Minnesota if we cannot find a way to stop this continued loss of providers that has averaged out to more than one per day over the last decade. We also need to find ways to bring more loving and qualified caregivers into this profession.

As a family child care provider, I can tell you first hand how heart wrenching it’s been to hear the desperation in the voice of parents when they call and cry to me because they’ve contacted dozens and dozens of other providers and no one has room for their children. And as difficult this has been for providers, with thousands shutting down, and others operating with uncertainty or fear, it’s nothing compared to what parents are facing, knowing they cannot provide for their families without working and they cannot work, if they cannot find child care.

This is a complex issue and Minnesota families and providers alike deserve well thought out and properly vetted solutions to turn this around and we believe this task force can be that solution.

We encourage the committee members to take time this legislative session to reach out to parents and caregivers in your district to hear firsthand the struggle it can be to find childcare. Providers and the families we serve need your support and assistance in resolving this child care crisis and you can take the first step by voting to support of the formation of this new task force today. Thank you!