

Testimony from a Middle-Class Mom

Thursday, November 9, 2013

Hello, my name is Mallory Plotz. A year ago, I started the process of talking to my legislators about the broken child care system. Although the field of early education is still far from receiving the pay they deserve, I was so grateful to see the continued support through the “The Great Start Compensation Payments” for the child care providers across our state. It was also a relief to hear that low-income families have access to more support through the much-needed changes that were made to Child Care Assistance and Early Learning Scholarships programs. However, as a middle-class couple with two young children in need of child care, my husband and I have had many struggles with finding and affording quality child care in the past (almost) 5 years.

With a combined salary of \$110,000 which is not far over the median household income in Minnesota, we have faced many child care challenges. As full-time working parents of two young children, my husband and I could only afford to have one of our girls in a child care center for preschool, and only 3 days per week at (\$57 per day.) Our youngest was home with my mom each day, who chose to retire early to support us, because even if we could afford to put both of our children into child care, there were no spots available for infants and toddlers anywhere near us at the time.

When my Mom suffered a terrible break to her foot and was in need of several weeks off for surgery and recovery. We quickly realized that we couldn't rely on only her for our child care needs, and should consider putting our toddler into a brand new family child care that we stumbled across with an opening. We considered this option, because it would be much more affordable for our income to have her in a family child care, versus the child care center that our older daughter goes to, even though this meant two drop off and pick up locations for our two children. In order to afford this, my husband and I literally took out our emergency fund that we had set aside, and we planned to pull from that money each month to afford the additional child care expense we were taking on.

To our horror, the Friday before touring the new family child care provider's home, our 18 month old toddler died in her sleep. With her autopsy very recently finalized, we are now learning her cause of death is “undetermined” and classified as SUDC (Sudden Unexpected Death of a Child.) I am still very much in shock that my story took this horrendous turn, as I am sure you are as well. But before I told you about our tragedy, I hope you were also shocked by the fact that two full-time working parents making \$110,000 per year could not comfortably afford to have 2 children in child care in our small Southern, MN town, and we needed to pull from our family's emergency fund to even afford the 3 days of care per week for the two of them. It is clear that Minnesota families still need your help in affording quality child care, please pay attention to these challenges and offer more widespread support.

Unfortunately, my husband and I will no longer benefit from any changes made to support the middle-class for child care, because our toddler died before the state figured this out; and our preschooler is heading to Kindergarten in the Fall. Although I have many new priorities on my list to advocate for now, I am still passionate about Minnesota fixing this broken system of child care. It is my hope that if nothing else, my testimony helps to drive home the point of ALL there is that we are missing, with every day that goes by that we're not helping more families and children. Please take action to help other middle-class families that are facing the challenges we did when trying to find and afford quality child care. Thank you.

Mallory Plotz, Parent Aware Quality Coach and CLASS Coach, Rochester, MN

Childcare support in next legislative session

Amanda Woelfel Padilla

Sun 11/12/2023 7:27 PM

Dear Representatives,

I'm writing in support of legislation to reduce childcare costs for middle class families.

It's my understanding that one proposal is to try to limit childcare costs to 7% of income for families.

My husband and I have one preschool age kid (so less expensive than an infant re: care) - and we're right around that 7% threshold personally. I'm a hospital social worker and my spouse has a good consulting job. I can't imagine how families with more children or different jobs make it work and it can come with many sacrifices re childcare and early education quality.

Outside of this being good for kids and families one area where I think this is very important is workforce participation in critical fields. As a healthcare worker I've seen firsthand how much of the workforce shortage may be attributable to the lack of affordable quality childcare. Supporting middle class families will help many parents in needed jobs get back to work.

Thanks for your consideration

Amanda Woelfel Padilla

Bloomington MN