

LEAD & CARE

Association of Family Child Care Professionals



Partnering with Providers, Supporting Family Child Care Businesses

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March 7, 2024

RE: [HF4425](#) (Hemmingsen-Jaeger) Home day care restrictions prohibited.

Mister Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 26 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Lead & Care (rebranded Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network, MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I am testifying on behalf of Lead & Care in **support of HF4425** which will lift restrictions by entities which disallow a resident from having a Family Child Care business in their home.

Family Child Care is critical to the care of children and support of families. Where someone lives and even home ownership should not restrict the opportunity of providing such services.

Purchasing a home is a major investment and much thought is put into the needs of a family and the community they choose to be involved in.

When a family has made these decisions, they should not be informed that they cannot open a licensed program. There are cases where this communication happened after purchase and association membership. The family is not able to relocate and therefore the family and the whole community loses an opportunity to be a contributor to the same community.

This bill will provide clear support for licensed family child care in all communities and provides protection for individual families in home ownership.

Thank you to Rep. Hemmingsen-Jaeger and others for bringing this bill forward.

Cyndi Cunningham

Lead & Care Public Policy Chairperson

Dear Decision Makers,

Let me start off with a couple of facts to help you understand the local childcare landscape. There are 224 active family child care (i.e., in-home daycare) licenses in Washington County, according to the [Minnesota Department of Human Services](#). The number of licensed child care centers in the county is 76, roughly one-third the number of in-home licenses. While you can argue that child care centers have greater capacities than in-home facilities, it cannot be ignored the essential role in-home providers play in this community – and country.

Without the kind hearts who open their homes to care for our babies and children, this community would have an even greater childcare crisis on its hands.

[The U.S. Census Bureau](#) indicates there are more than 15,000 children (5.5% of the population) under aged 5 who live in Washington County. If every childcare center had capacity to enroll 100 children, that would provide space for 7,600 children – only half of the population who are under school age. Keep in mind that county lines don't prevent childcare centers from accepting children outside those boundaries, further driving up demand for quality daycare.

While not every family with young children is in need of childcare, in an era when majority of households have two working parents, I think it's safe to say that most do. Based on the numbers presented above, you can imagine how competitive the market is to find reputable childcare.

For parents like myself who have children under age 2, the competition is even greater given the tight [state restrictions](#) on how many infants any childcare provider can care for in an effort to keep our babies safe. For in-home providers it's two infants. For centers, it's four infants per staff member, with a max of eight infants and two staff. Many childcare facilities in the area don't even accept children younger than preschool age (2.5 years), making availability slimmer for parents like myself.

In-home providers are pivotal to providing more options and opportunities for families. Small businesses – in-home daycares included – are the backbone of our community and nation's economy. Childcare providers, however, are more than an economic engine, they are a necessity.

Here's a real-life example to highlight what this means for families. My husband and I found out we were expecting in November 2022, with baby's expected arrival in July 2023. We knew we would need childcare for a 4-month-old starting in November 2023 based on the length of my maternity leave. We began our search in January 2023 after the holiday season – six months before our baby was born and 10 months before we needed care! We reached out to more than two dozen providers – half centers and half in-home daycares. Of the centers we reached out to, nearly all were already full for 2023 and many were full through 2024, meaning we would've had to secure a space before I was even pregnant. Of the few that had openings, they either had astronomical rates or violations and reviews that put their reputation in question, which we were not willing to take a chance on with our baby girl.

Thankfully, we found Jenni, an in-home provider in Woodbury – just 5 minutes away from our home. Not only was she conveniently located and offered hours that fit our work schedules, but she was within walking distance to a park, prioritized outdoor play, she was bilingual, and ultimately, offered a safe space for care in a smaller setting that would be less overwhelming for a young infant and more accommodating to our personal needs than a childcare center.

Our story, unfortunately, is not unique, nor as challenging as others. For parents experiencing financial hardship or those with greater financial restraints, the options become more limited, making in-home providers even more crucial.

[Childcare Aware of Minnesota](#), which works with the Minnesota Department of Human Services to collect data, reports the average weekly rate for in-home daycare in the metro area for an infant was \$202 (roughly \$10,000/year) in 2022. For childcare centers, it was \$375 (nearly \$20,000/year), almost double in-home cost. As all of us can relate to, inflation has driven up the price of nearly everything in the last couple of years, so you can expect these numbers have only increased, making the need for affordable childcare that much greater.

If you take anything away from this letter, please remember this. Your decisions, while they may be coming from a place of good intention, have a profound and cascading impact. Your decisions do not affect only a small group of individuals within the community – they affect all the families that in-home providers not just “do business with,” but provide necessary care for.

Signed,

A working family dependent on in-home childcare