March 28, 2017

Health and Human Services Finance Committee

HF945

Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for taking time to consider my perspective on portions of this bill.

* **Family Child Care Licensing:**
  + **Changing the definition of Annual to during the licensing year: Support**

Lessens confusion and places the focus on quality training, not time lines

* + **Changes in DHS: Support**

DHS should be communicating with providers directly.

DHS should have more oversight of county licensors including additional training and ability to determine if a licensor is performing a high standard of implementing Rule 2 and other laws FCC’s are to follow.

Including changing the Senate version of changing the Administrative Law Judges Ruling to be final, not a recommendation. Any provider who appeals a Negative action should have the confidence that a ruling by the ALJ will not just be returned to DHS where DHS still gets the final ruling on their own decision and the providers must wait up to another 90 days for a decision.

* + **Positive Support Rule – exclude centers and FCC’s: Support**

This Rule is wrongly applied by DHS, not the court settlement, to these programs. Child care providers in these settings are already trained in discipline and appropriate interventions. We already cannot use restraints and physical punishment. Children which meet the Rule 40 definitions are not in our care, they are in other facilities which do fall under the Positive Support Rule requirements. Having FCC’s and Centers under this rule places additional trainings and expectations in-appropriately on our profession.

* + **Correction orders removal: Support**

These correction orders (and the Negative actions) are public information and can be treated as such without letters of accusation being accessed on a public internet lookup. This look up is in complete, not helpful for families and hurtful for providers of all settings. If accused and then overturned, these orders should be pulled off of the look up and placed solely in the provider’s records within DHS and the counties. Then, if there are additional issues they can be taken into consideration for further actions.

* **Eliminate Pathways II Scholarships and provide additional funding to Pathways I: Support**

Pathways II scholarships are facility benefits not a specific family benefit. A facility should not be able to make a decision regarding government funding on who receives this benefit, the state and counties should have full control of this. There are many more families who need this funding and families should be making the decision of where their children are attending.

* **Early Learner Scholarships can be used at any Parent Aware rated program:** **Support**

Any facility that is in the system of being rated is aiming for and attaining the quality of support families need for stability. Currently the rating system is not fully implemented in all areas of the state nor in all facilities (i.e. specifically Family Child Care) and therefor there is limited locations as to where these dollars can be spent. The program has been rolled out in a manner that it is primarily centers who have administrators to full fill paperwork who have obtained the higher star rating, again limiting what settings families can place their children.

* **Eliminating Voluntary Pre-K programs:** **Support**

These programs were established based on a drive towards Universal Pre-k and a wrongly understood perspective as to what ‘brain development’ is in pre-k and how to assist children who are in the at-risk levels for not succeeding in school.

Brain development is about the brain being healthy to learn long term, not learning ABC’s and other ‘facts’. It is about having positive relationships with adults and lowering stress. High stress of poverty and the instability it brings along with stressed relationships leads to poor brain development. Placing these children in a school setting does not address the issue at hand: Poverty, family instability, stress due to economic struggles, etc.

Funding ELS’s and CCAP lays a foundation which builds the family, supports the child and prepares everyone for success.

Thank you for considering my perspective on these topics within the Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham

Cyndi’s Daycare

373 Idaho Ave W

St Paul, MN 55117