

Karen A. Hebert
S.316
4/2/14

Hi,

My name is Karen A. Hebert & I have been a home childcare provider in Fairfax for over 30 years, most of these as a registered provider including specialized care for a time, working out of my home. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony over the phone so that the parents of the 4 children I am caring for today did not have to seek alternate care. I strongly oppose a union for childcare workers. I currently care for 6 families, all of whom stand with me on this opposition. As I shared with a parent last night as he picked up his child that I was going to give testimony again, his response was "Unbelievable!; when will NO mean NO & they won't be able to keep pushing for this?"

Many do not understand that childcare providers run small, independently owned businesses working from our homes. We set our own rates, make our own schedules, and decide our own rules/guidelines. Further, registered home providers run our businesses in accordance with our own state regulations.

There have been times over the past 30 years that I have contacted the Child Development Division with questions & concerns & I have always been heard, respected & listened to. (and helped!) IF a union comes in, I will be prohibited from speaking directly to the Child Development Division on any matter that is the subject of collective bargaining. To me this seems like a violation of my first amendment right. Why would I want to PAY someone for the voice/job I can continue to do myself as I have over the past 30 years?

I set my own rates. If a subsidy family in my care gets partial payment, the rest of my fee comes out of their pocket. An increase in subsidy rates, while definitely needed, will only split the pie differently. I will still receive my full week tuition. However, if a union is enacted, the dues or agency fees come out of the subsidy payment. This will result in a net loss in my budget~which only means I would have to raise my rates to cover this cost. Because I will have NO part of a union, I will NO longer accept subsidy families as I have over my many years in business. I have spoken with many providers across the state who have stated they will also NO longer accept subsidy. Further, our elected officials have the power to increase subsidy payments through direct legislation without the use of a union. Why are we paying an outside group to accomplish something that could and should be done in-state??

A union is NOT what our childcare business' need. In my opinion, they will do more harm than good, charge ridiculous fee forcing providers to increase their rates or worse yet, be the reason many providers will no longer accept subsidy families. A union will bring further havoc to both House & Senate members as they continue to hound you to find more money to increase the subsidy rates they have all but promised providers, but to foremost line their own pockets, with money from our state which already has a very strapped budget. Where will this money come from?? From us hard working people! Please, I ask you to give them the LOUD & CLEAR voice that Vermont childcare business owners do NOT NEED nor WANT a union; we want to keep our own voice in saying what we feel is right for us!

Thank you,
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