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Good afternoon, my name is Emily Creighton-Pryer and for the last nine years, I have been a registered home provider in Bradford at my program, Rabbit Track Daycare. I have worked in child care for 16 years and while we have made improvements by organizing, we can do even for providers and the families we serve by organizing a union and negotiating with the state as equals.

In the fall of 2009, when we began the incredible journey to building our union, we had no voice. We were treated as a suggestion box, not as partners in the decision making process. We were not recognized as early educators, but as "babysitters."

Home providers often felt isolated and disconnected from our colleagues— building our union has helped and continues to help decrease our sense of isolation. The early education profession has become strong because of the many opportunities to network.

Child care providers throughout the state have come together over the past three years to work with their colleagues. I would like to share a quote from one of our colleagues, Judy Pransky, "I have worked in this profession for 40 years and I know, first hand, how important it is to have a

voice in the decision-making process. When we make it through the final legislative process, I know that we will work together to improve quality, access and affordability and build the early care and education system Vermont's children deserve -we know what needs to be done and it is time to do it.”

By coming together, from across the state, to work toward a common purpose— the formation of our union— we have been empowered. We have positively impacted our profession by:

- Advocating for and receiving increased funding for the Child Care Subsidy.
- Garnering respect as professionals.
- Building strong relationships with our elected officials and passing legislation.
- Hosting local professional development opportunities in all regions of the state.
- We fought against the Challenges for Change budget cuts that would have cut funding to our local childcare referral agencies.

We are no longer invisible to the decision makers. And frankly, we want to bargain with the state over the things that affect our business every day. I want to be able to continue my efforts to improve early education in Vermont.

Early educators have value to offer to the state in its role in policy-making decisions. We are the only ones that know the day-to-day challenges and successes.

We have been talking to providers all over the state and we have the majority of providers we've contacted support coming together and negotiating with the state. Any legislation you pass will

not form a union. Please pass S316 so we can prove our majority and move forward to improving early care and education for providers and the families we serve.