

**Martha DeGraaf**

**S.316**

**4/2/14**

My Name is Martha DeGraaf, I am a registered childcare provider in the City of Vergennes. I have been taking care of children in my home for 14 years.

First I would like to thank you for taking time to listen to me this morning. I would also like to point out the reasons that I do not think S. 316 is good legislation for both childcare providers and the hard working families of Vermont.

I currently take care of three families receiving subsidy from the State of Vermont. One child is a foster child waiting to be adopted, another family is a single Mom who is going to school and working full time, and the other family the Dad is a farmer and Mom is in school getting her nursing degree. This bill requires dues or agency fees to be automatically taken out of subsidy payments. As an independent small business owner, I refuse to pay anything to this outside unwanted agency. Therefore, should this bill pass and I am required to pay dues or agency fees, I will no longer accept children receiving subsidy from the State of Vermont. This will leave three families without childcare in an already strapped market.

Even if the proposed union is able to increase the subsidy rate- which could be done through legislative appropriation- it does not benefit me as a provider. When subsidy rates are raised, it is a parent benefit. Parents still pay the co-pay, they just pay less and the state pays more. The legislature determines the subsidy rate and I am concerned that we could end up paying a lot of money in union dues that would be deducted from the subsidy payments, and then not have the subsidy rise. Are you telling me that if a union is voted in- subsidy will automatically be raised? The money needs to be in the budget. Subsidy, which is provided by the State of Vermont, should be going to the provider providing childcare to Vermont's children, not to pay Union dues.

I am still confused as to why the AFT feels we need to have their representation to be heard. I have never had an issue speaking with my elected officials, and the people within the Child Development Division. I am deeply concerned that if a Union is formed and I would have to go through them to be heard, the response to some timely questions could take longer than it does now. Often I can send an email in the evening and have a response from CDD in the morning. Adding a third party Union Rep will only slow the process. I also wonder how this is constitutional as it feels like my right to directly petition my government is being taken away.

I strongly fear that, should this bill be voted in, the children of Vermont will suffer. Quality childcare for low income families will be hard to come by, if not impossible. This bill should not be about what side of the aisle you sit on, but rather about how the people directly affected by the bill feel. The childcare providers in Vermont have spoken- we do NOT want a union. Thank you for your time.