

Hello,

My name is Donna Bailey and I am the Co-Director of the Addison County Parent/Child Center. We serve 40 children in our 5 stars, therapeutic childcare programs. We are an Early HeadStart site and have worked for 37 years at improving and providing the highest quality childcare that is therapeutic and developmentally appropriate. We are pre-qualified for Pre-K dollars to serve the 12 children who are 3-5 in our program; we are paid for 8 this year. We work with families and our hope is always to help build parenting skills and resiliency skills in children in order to have families grow up happy and healthy.

Addison County is proud to have high quality child care settings and we, as well as the Parent Child Center Network would like to thank you for your work on this issue and for recognizing the importance of early care and education. However, We hope that you can slow down and learn from what we have done so far before we change the system again. No one doubts that we can move further – it is a matter of not ruining what we have done but to build on it.

We are here today to urge your committee to not push through new perk legislation at this time, but to work with the Building Bright Futures Think Tank, a multidisciplinary group with statewide representation, that can spend time over the next year building a framework for changes to Act 166 that are right for Vermont, and bring this back to the legislature.

The intent of the bill has been to help children and families by offering increased access to care. Let's not lose that. A local group involved in coordination has been a key to our success. A singular system that has the capacity to incorporate both AOE and CDD rules and administration would be helpful. Age appropriate settings are critical. We cannot afford to put private child care programs out of business and replace them – if possible – with school programs that are not full day, full care programs. We have a childcare crisis, so losing the ones we have would be devastating.

Our space, staff, philosophies, etc. are a result of years in this profession and on-going reflection and supervision. This is our profession. My background is in education and I understand the difference in providing education and providing care to children. While I

believe that both AOE and AHS have a role in helping our youngest citizens. There is a national and international focus on providing appropriate settings for young children that public and private providers are integrated in the same quality rating systems. There is often o-administration within state government. I am concerned that moving to quickly will lead to separate systems and not lead to cohesion and a more efficient system that is best for our young children,

Again, please slow down and let's use the systems we have to create the best programming we can.