



Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2023

To: House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

From: Sarah Kenney, Chief Policy Officer, Let's Grow Kids

Re: H. 92, relating to expanding eligibility for unemployment insurance

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On behalf of Let's Grow Kids, I want to send a brief note of support for the provision in H.92 Sec.1 that would allow Vermonters to apply for unemployment benefits in the event that they must separate from employment due to the unexpected loss of child care.

As your committee is well aware, Vermont is experiencing a severe child care crisis 86% of child care centers are reporting staffing shortages, with 51% of programs reducing their program hours. The most recent data shows there was a net loss of 479 regulated child care programs between 2012 and 2020. Unfortunately, unexpected loss of child care is a reality for some Vermont families given this circumstance. Allowing these individuals to access unemployment insurance will help alleviate some of the immense strain that families experience when their child care placement falls apart and provide families with a small amount of breathing room to find and secure new child care. The infrastructure is in place to support expanding eligibility to these Vermonters, as Vermont already collects data that captures a family's loss of child care within the Child Development Division Information System. Under current rule, child care programs participating in Child Care Financial Assistance Program are required to submit attendance reports.

Thank you for your consideration and for all the work you have done to make progress on finding a solution to Vermont's child care crisis. We look forward to continuing that work together this year.