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To: House Committee on Human Services regarding S.206

I am writing to testify to make Early Childhood Education a recognized profession. Last year I testified to the Senate against the bill due to my concern about losing family registered home programs when we know we already have a childcare shortage. By testifying I was asked to make a committee to write up an alternate proposal that we deemed to be fair for us registered family home programs. The group of us asked to be grandfathered due to many years of experience, good standing and many years of professional development training. This was granted by making an alternative pathway called the Family Childcare Provider License. A few years ago, I took the Assessment of Prior Learning course through CCV and was able to obtain many credits for my knowledge that I have gained over the last 28 years in the field of early childhood education. While I was able to do this, I was feeling not able to finish my degree for personal reasons. After many friends, family and colleagues encouraged me to go back and finish my degree as I am an empty nester I signed up for my first course in January and I have been doing quite well due to this support. Yes, it works for me but may not for everyone, hence the reason I wanted us to be grandfathered.

What has changed to make me in favor of this bill s.206 now? While family registered childcares are held accountable due to our names being on our program registration license, I understand why this would not work for centers. How are families to know if one of these people decides to provide unregulated childcare or babysitting? I have learned how it would work to benefit the family childcares. It would help them to transition to a center more smoothly if they decided to close their programs. As for the centers, I have heard of the few centers over the last years that have been shut down by the state due to violations and abuse allegations. I felt very strongly that when they say teacher X did the abuse or teacher Z then did this violation, there are no names to know who is doing these horrible things to our most vulnerable population. How are the next centers to know if the person they are hiring was one of these people that had caused harm to a child? There's no transparency and accountability for these people. I believe now that being a recognized profession and having a board of our peers that we would be held accountable to, this could help cut out this horrible act. If the person gets accused of unprofessional conduct, they would be investigated by OPR. If they are found guilty, their name would be on file.

Then if they did try to get hired at another center or care for children in their home, the director and parents could see their history. This will help all of us early educators to be held accountable and professional, which is what we all want for the children. The ultimate goal is to keep our children safe and give them the strongest base to begin their learning journey.

So yes, I was once against the bill, but I am now in favor of having all educators be professionals, not just going to a job and not being seen as babysitters. Let's be seen as we all are. Professional!

Thank you for your time.

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Registered home provider

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