

Opposition to S.206

Sherrie James

Registered Home Childcare Provider (33 years)
Waterbury Center, VT
802-777-3115
sherrie.james92@gmail.com

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Sherrie James, I operate a registered home childcare program in Waterbury Center. I am here to speak in opposition to S.206. We already have a childcare crisis in Vermont, we do not need to pass legislation that will exacerbate it.

Redundant Oversight

The bill's goal of professionalizing our field ignores the reality that we are already professionals. As a registered provider, I am already overseen by the Child Development Division (CDD). My name is directly associated with my program, my home is inspected, and I already meet strict state standards and regulations. I adhere to requirements for annual professional development.

Creating a second, separate Board of Early Childhood Educators doesn't add safety, it adds bureaucracy. It asks me to pay a **\$175 initial fee** and a **\$250 renewal fee** every two years. For a workforce that is already underpaid, this isn't professionalization, it's a tax on employment. We have no idea what other requirements (hoops to jump through) this additional board will add. Passing this bill will also require 3 new job positions at the Secretary of State's office.

The Danger of Degree Requirements

Most concerning is the requirement for college degrees. High-quality childcare is built on years of hands-on experience and the deep trust of the families I serve. A degree doesn't help me teach a room of toddlers or support a child's emotional growth. A college degree does not guarantee a higher quality of care.

If we want to see what happens when we mandate degrees, we can look at Washington, D.C. In 2018, they implemented these rules and their licensed childcare centers **dropped by 9%** in two years. While the rest of the nation increased by 3%. Six years later, only 24-40% of teachers and 50% of home providers had obtained the required credentials (WAMU American University, 02/2024). Currently, Vermont only meets the needs of **40% of our infants!** We cannot afford to lose a single provider, let alone 9% of our workforce, because of an academic mandate.

This bill would also eliminate the ability for a stay at home parent to open a registered home program while raising their own children. These programs account for a large percentage of current childcare spots.

The Economic Impact

When providers close because of these hurdles, costs go up for everyone, research suggests by as much as **40%**! That will hurt working parents and our state's economy, which already loses **\$344 million annually** due to childcare shortages (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2025).

Please do not trade the actual, available care Vermont families rely on today, or the ability of new programs to open, for an academic credential that many of us simply cannot attain. I urge you to vote 'No' on S.206 and focus on ways to support us, not push us out. Thank you.

Personal Information

Throughout the 33 years I have run my in home childcare business, I have completed several college level courses. I have had the freedom to choose which subjects I'm interested in and which will support my profession. I do not currently hold a college degree. In my opinion, completing my required general education courses (college math, research and writing, and English composition) will not benefit my childcare program or my quality of care. Therefore, finding time, money, and energy to complete them feels very unnecessary and overwhelming. I have spoken to many providers who feel the same way.