

Registered Home Daycare Provider, Waterbury Center VT
April 8, 2025

My name is Penny Howes. I am 58 years old and have operated my home daycare for 35 years, providing a safe, nurturing, and educational environment—without a college degree.

I have worked with children of all abilities, connecting families with resources and welcoming specialists into my home to support development. I actively pursue training and collaborate with professionals to provide the highest quality care.

As a registered 30+ years childcare provider, I complete 17+ hours of professional development annually, maintain certifications, and comply with Vermont Licensing regulations. In 2017, I was the first provider in Vermont to successfully complete my Level 1 portfolio through Vermont Northern Lights at CCV and earned my Level 1 Certificate for Early Childhood Professionals by demonstrating my experience and ongoing education—without needing a degree.

A degree does not automatically make someone more qualified than a provider with 30+ years of hands-on experience. My commitment to professional growth should not be minimized simply because I lack a formal degree.

Most Vermont childcare providers already work 40-50 hours per week—how realistic is it to require them to also pursue a degree, especially without benefits or incentives? Meanwhile, many daycares facing closures or abuse allegations are *licensed* facilities with degreed staff.

Requiring a degree implies that those without one are incapable of providing a safe, loving, and enriching environment. By that logic, are parents without degrees also unfit to raise children?

If this bill S.119 passes, many quality home daycares will close, worsening the childcare crisis and driving families toward unregulated childcare with little oversight. I urge lawmakers to recognize the value of experienced providers—degree or not—and protect access to quality childcare in Vermont.

I STRONGLY URGE members of the legislature NOT to pass the S.119 Bill into Vermont Law.