

Introduction

My name is Heather Armell and I run a 4 star registered home childcare in Monkton. I am here to talk about us NOT making early education a recognized profession at this time. My reasons are many of us are concerned we will lose many dedicated providers who are not interested or able to go back to school to obtain an associates degree. Many of us feel we are already professionals and do not need another entity to tell us that we are a professional or how to do our jobs. We are concerned about the wording of being 'licenced'. Many think that becoming a recognized profession will make us licensed teachers which is false. I have been in early education for 27 years and operating my own in-home childcare business for 15 years. I am very passionate about my career. I conduct myself as a professional and the families who attend and have attended view me as such. While I myself do not have my associates degree, I do have early ed **COLLEGE** credits. To complete an associates I need a few more credits such as algebra and English composition. Those missing classes will not make me a better teacher or more of a professional. Many providers also have some credits while others have no college education at all. Yet they have many years of hands on experience and trainings under their belt. Many of us have worked with people with degrees and they were not good with the children while others were. Just as some people not having degrees are wonderful with the children and others may not be. A degree is not going to make the teacher a better teacher as we have heard stories recently of children mistreated. You need to be willing to get on a child's level during the day, playing on the floor, and give 110%. Currently the state requires all child care professionals to take 15 hours of professional development and if you are a protective services provider you need 21 hours. I obtain over 60 hours of training a year. I try to utilize nap time to take professional development training but, depending on the needs of the children, that doesn't always work, especially when there's an infant in my care. In those situations, my trainings need to be taken during my personal time. Even without the trainings, my "free time" consists of curriculum planning, getting projects ready, childcare finances and everything else it takes to run a successful business to ensure the children thrive. I don't think people realize that many home providers work alone including myself. We are solely responsible for a multitude of jobs that if we were at a center many people would be doing. We have money management, director, teacher, janitor roles and more. We work over 50 hours a week. Most of us do this because it is our calling and our passion. We love the children as our own and enjoy planning and attending engaging activities with

childcare families on occasional weekends. As a home provider strong relationships are built with the children and families as we see them mornings and evenings. We have an open communication relationship throughout the day.

By being the sole teacher for ages birth to 5 we can offer a holistic approach and build our curriculum to fit the child. We reduce the stress of their young lives as they grow in a consistent environment. We build trust with the children and they build their first friendships. Positive peer interactions happen as the older children become role models while the younger are learning from them and building empathy between them all. As we know 90% of a child's brain develops before kindergarten so we are helping them to have a strong and stable start in life.

Numerous years ago new regulations went into effect and we had some childcare providers close their spaces. New regulations required people to get their GED, medication training, mandated reporter training and fundamentals (which is a 40 hour class by itself). I support these trainings as they directly relate to the care of a child. I think requiring a full associate's degree after many of us have been in this profession for decades proving ourselves to be quite competent is excessive. The children in my care ages birth to 5 will not benefit from me taking algebra or english composition! They are well prepared to go off to kindergarten. I would like to have ALL home providers have the opportunity for an in depth discussion before a bill is passed. I feel this one is not considering all providers' voices and the impact it could potentially have.

Instead of requiring providers to get an associates degree, other alternatives should be considered such as grandfathering in well established providers or increasing mandated training hours directly related to childcare. Many providers had little knowledge about the OPR coming about. I myself stumbled upon it in November. When I tried to tell others about this they thought it wouldn't happen as it wasnt coming from CDD. IF something that is this BIG is going to impact the industry then every single provider needs to be included so they can have a voice and come up with what will work for all. Please consider voting no so we do not lose any providers and hurt our childcare crisis even more.

Thank you