

January 25, 2023

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Linda Schroeder. I have operated my group licensed in home family childcare business for over 30 years. I have cared for and provided support to hundreds of families over the years. My experience and knowledge are constantly evolving as I strive to provide care to the children within my program and their families.

I read the Senate Bill 2301 that is being proposed. I agree their needs to be an establishment of a Child Care Stabilization Program. The amounts that will be used to calculate the monthly payments I believe will be perceived as too low. As a provider I greatly appreciate any effort to help provide care and services to children and families. There has been a significant increase in food and supplies over the past year. As I am sure you are also aware that eggs are \$5 a dozen, milk is anywhere from \$4.29 to \$5.99 a gallon. Even a loaf of bread is close to \$6. All of this added into the rest of the challenges that providers face on a regular basis make this career more and more challenging. I understand that the funds have a focus to help support increasing wages for staff. I am curious if there is an opportunity to have a better check and balance system in place to support the use of the funds to promote a more positive work culture and professional mindset that fosters a positive work experience and environment. This will provide a positive work experience and help retain the staff that are needed to successfully operate a childcare business. The bill states that the provider will report annually to the department on how the funding to directly address wages and benefits. To me personal/professional development is a critical component of a benefit that all child care workers should receive. If you are completing a form at the end of the year regarding funds you received over the course of the year, I am wondering how this doesn't just provide lip service in the format of a form and not actually establish a precedent of professional accountability of those funds.

Is there more clarification available to further explain the added 25% for the quality improvement process. Who is getting this? Is it the staff/team member that took the classes and received the certification or do those funds go to the business or director. Who qualifies for this. It is worded if the provider meets the highest level of quality improvement process. What are the parameters that define "highest level". What Step listing is required in ND Growing Futures? Is it only the director that needs to be at a certain step? What is the letter that is attributed to the Category that the provider is listed at? Does the completion of college coursework, professional training such as CDA or Aim4Excellence become part of the required criteria. How many of those need to be completed? Is it all to be at the highest? The enrollment and completion of a Best-in-Class Cohort is also something else that is rolled out in many communities. This however is a very lengthy process. There can only be so many in the group and it takes months to complete. It is a process that will literally take years for you to reach the highest level. If you check the % of providers that are currently enrolled and have completed this, you will find the statistics to be very low because it is something that is fairly new. With all these variables being potentially part of the improvement process I am wondering which meet the highest level?

Thank you for your time.

Smiles

Linda Schroeder

