

Prepared Testimony by Adrian Miller
Senate Workforce Development Committee Senator

Mike Wobbema, Chairman

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My name is Adrian Miller, and I am the Director of Charge on Together Childcare, a group childcare facility. I oppose House Bill No. 1119 proposed by the Human Services Committee, which aims to change the North Dakota Century Code for childcare providers. I believe these changes will not benefit many providers in North Dakota. The existing laws and regulations should remain in place until the study on childcare rules and regulations is completed.

Eliminating multiple types of licenses, particularly group licenses, will hinder the growth and improvement of our childcare industry. These changes will force providers to either downsize, leading to fewer children and employees, or expand into centers, which come with additional rules and regulations. While I support reducing the number of licensing types for providers to simplify the process, I believe we should retain center, group, and family childcare licenses. I do not agree with including in-home provider and self-declaration licenses, as they do not receive state funding or payment for their services. In-home providers essentially offer a separate service that only caters to one child needing care in their home.

With 15 years of experience in the childcare industry, working hands-on in center, family, and group childcare facilities, I have witnessed the struggles providers face, regardless of their size. Removing group facilities will negatively impact both providers and the families they serve. Providers who choose to become home facilities will reduce the number of children they can care for, putting their staff out of work and creating more families in need of childcare. Expanding into centers will require more staff with higher credentials and qualifications. Additionally, many providers will lose food reimbursement from the Heartland and Nutrition Food Program and will have to rely on parents signing up for free and reduced lunches, or bear the cost of food out of pocket.

I also oppose the fiscal note for the budget for providers and many other changes proposed in this bill. Providers struggle to meet financial needs and offer benefits to themselves and their staff. While it may appear that we make substantial money on paper, much of it is reinvested into our businesses and the families we serve. Childcare providers must adhere to numerous rules and regulations to meet state codes, requiring significant financial investment

back into our facilities. Unlike other businesses that can make larger profits, childcare providers have a set amount they can charge families and a limited number of children they can accommodate. This makes it challenging to offer benefits or higher wages to staff without raising rates excessively. In my experience, even when we increased childcare rates, some parents chose to leave for smaller facilities with cheaper rates. With a set limitation on the funds a provider can receive each month, if all payments are received on time, including state childcare assistance, they can make ends meet. However, this is often not the case.

I ask the Senate committee to support providers by attracting new providers, retaining staff, improving facilities, and promoting childcare providers as essential workers in North Dakota. We are the backbone of our state's economic growth and hope to continue to grow with our state. If the committee has any questions, I am here to answer them. Thank you.