

1/24/2023

To Whom it May Concern:

From my understanding, this bill is to support Early Childhood Programs. However, most of it is directed to preschool aged children and older. Best in the class programs don't fund most of the daycares in the state. Head start programs already get their funding from the state. Childcare owners are who need the support the most and this doesn't address that.

In childcare, the state mandated rule is you can have 1 employee for 4 babies. The cost of 1 employee salary is \$2400.00. In rural daycares, the parents are charged \$600 per baby. Of course this doesn't include any overhead cost. Obviously, when you do the math, this doesn't check out.

Why do we need to fund quality ratings? Daycare providers already are so inundated in mandated paperwork, that's just one more thing to try to do the paperwork for. We are already spread so thin trying to make ends meet, filling out paperwork for child care assistances, for a food program, for the licenser, for new employees, keeping up on training, making daily reports for each child, making schedules, invoices, payroll, menus and on top of it trying to provide a curriculum to several different age groups. You can't afford to hire more staff because parents can't afford to pay it. So you work hours and hours after daycare for no pay. Trying to compete in all these programs is time consuming.

Let me tell you about my experience with quality ratings. They come into your daycare and give you points after a short observation. During the observation, the children never behave how they usually do because a NEW person is in the daycare and curiosity gets the best of them. What they fail to see is how you made an inclusive environment that the boy with special needs now can be a part of. I find it hard to believe that access to books, art media and scissors at all times is better than simply teaching a child to ask for it when they want it. A child doesn't need to know how to talk to ask for something. Daycares don't have extra money to replace things when broke. I can tell you, a group of toddlers can destroy a box of markers in the matter of seconds by tasting each color. Books are ripped and chewed in the seconds it takes to walk over there. In these instances, teaching children what to do with these things takes time and one on one attention. Because I don't want my art material and books wrecked, and I place them out of reach, doesn't make my daycare any less then someone else's. The structure of a daycare needs to fit the children and caretakers inside of it.

Why give the funding to program administrators when you can skip the middleman and just give it directly to daycares. For example, why does there need to be a group of people going around doing quality ratings? Does this money in this bill pay their salary? Give assistance to those who are caring for special needs. Give assistance to those living in rural areas where parents can't afford to pay the rising costs of daycare. Give assistance for payroll, accounting and taxes for daycares. Head Start, After School programs and best in class are already federally funded.

I feel this bill needs to be given more thought. After all, one of the greatest challenges in ND right now is finding employees. If daycares had more funding, they could be more competitive in wages and operate at full capacity. If daycares had more funds, they could keep the cost of caring for children down so families could afford daycare and get back to work. If daycares had more funds, they could provide special needs children more one on one care so they catch up developmentally and receive

some dire attention. If daycares had more funds, they wouldn't need to spread the staff so thin with child to staff ratio maxed. This would help with staff burnout and turnover.

Please give support to daycares, especially in rural areas,

Sincerely,

Bonnie Hofmann