

01/26/2023

Members of the workforce development committee,

My name is Lisa Keller. I have had the privilege to be an in-home childcare provider for almost 20 years.

I am writing to you today in opposition of SB 2301 as it is written. While I support stabilization funds for childcare, I do not think this bill can go through with the amounts listed. In October of 2021 child daycares were able to apply for a stabilization grant that would be available for the applicant for 12 months. The amount I was eligible for was more than four times the amount proposed here.

At that time, I reevaluated my childcare and came up with ways to use all of these funds to revamp my current set up. With this grant I was able to expand my childcare and I am now able to add ten more children to my capacity. This means that there are up to 10 more families that are able to have stable childcare in North Dakota. Another way I used these funds was to pay for trainings for my current staff/backup caregivers. I also was able to add a structure preschool curriculum for ages 2 and older. In order to fill these new available spots, I will need to hire quality caregivers.

While childcare is an emotional rewarding career it isn't always a financially rewarding one. We spend our days caring for and shaping the minds of the future of North Dakota. Without us parents would not be able to go to work and it would be North Dakota as a state that would feel the impact. It is a challenge to find individuals that are willing to take on the role of a childcare provider without a wage that should be given to somebody with such an important position.

Maybe some of the funds proposed in SB2323 could be allocated to help increase the amount of funding for this bill. Most of the programs from that bill are already federally funded.

I would love to be able to fill my spots and have the staff here to make sure that our daycare can run at capacity each day. I know that I am not the only provider that feels this way. There are a lot of parents that are frustrated that their kids are not able to attend or are sent home from their daycare due to staffing issues. Some of this could hopefully be alleviated by proper wages for providers and affordable trainings to make sure there is quality staff.

There are a lot of ways stabilizations funds can help providers and in turn help the children, families and North Dakota's workforce but the amounts listed just won't put a dent in the issue we are facing. So please reconsider this bill and the impact it will have on not only childcare but the workforce of North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and if you have any questions for me, please feel free to reach out.

Lisa Keller