

**TO: Human Services Committee**

**DATE: March 13, 2007**

**RE: Raised Bill No. 1382 An Act concerning Professional Assistance to Persons Providing Child Care Assistance**

Dear Senator Jonathon Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Lillie Branch and I run a licensed in home daycare for the past 14 years in Bridgeport.

Child care providers have one of the most important jobs in our communities, caring for children and providing early education and critical school readiness. For those reasons, I am supporting Raised Bill 1382. The right to collectively bargain with the state will allow us, providers, to make insightful contributions on improving the lives of children under the Care 4 Kids program. This field of providing needs some stability. I know providers who have left the business because they cannot afford to stay in it. There are some specific benefits that I would negotiate for if granted collective bargaining. First, health insurance is my biggest concern. I go to the Southwest Community Clinic and I consider this my saving grace. I pay \$45 per visit.

The other benefit would be is some sort of retirement or 401-k plan with the state. As at home providers we are self employed and do not have affordable access to either benefit.

In section 2b of this bill I am particularly hoping grant money will be afforded to providers. The state regulates what I can and cannot do, all for the safety of the children and I agree with many of these rules. For example, there are no knives in any drawers in my kitchen and all cabinets are on lockdown. If grant money was allotted to me, I would add a whole room to the back of my house and dedicate a larger area for the children to learn and play. With my current income I cannot afford to do this now.

The parents depend on me and I serve as part of their family. All the children call me grandma. I potty train them, build their social skills, teach them to share, teach them their ABC's and numbers as well as teaching them patience when it comes to learning a new skill.. I want to the best that I can and I try to make a special effort to assist working parents who may not have as much time to spend educating their children.

I believe I make a very valuable contribution to the state. I have flexible hours and I open my daycare at 7:30am and many times do not close my door until 6:00pm. That is a 10 and a half hour day. When my once a month unpredictable timing check is broke down I mane about \$4.00 and hour.

I urge you to support bill 1382 so that providers and children improve conditions and be best prepared for kindergarten. Thank you for your time.

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