

Date: March 6, 2007
To: Human Services Committee
**Re: Raised Bill No. 7302, AN ACT CONCERNING RATES PAID TO PROVIDERS
UNDER THE CHILD CUSTODY SUBSIDY PROGRAM**

Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Nilsa Ramirez and I am a family child care provider in New Haven, Connecticut. I have been taking care of kids for 15 years, first as a license-exempt provider and, for the last 8 years as a licensed provider.

Some people don't realize that family daycare providers are educators, but we are. I am much more than a babysitter. We know that early education begins at home. We teach the children we care for good manners and how to share, for example. We also teach the children how to recognize colors and basic counting skills so that they are better prepared when they arrive at school for the first time. We provide the kids with nutritious meals and snacks in a homelike setting.

I love working with kids but it is not easy. The reimbursement rates are low and we do not have health insurance as a group. Not only are the rates low, whether I watch an infant for 16 hours a week or thirty-four hours a week, the rate is the same. Also, many times we have to wait weeks, even months for parents to get approved for the subsidy. Because of the low pay and frustrations with the system, we all know of good providers who have given up and are looking for other work. Recently I learned of another excellent provider who had to close her daycare because she wasn't getting enough help from the state. It saddens me because I know she was an excellent child educator. Raising the reimbursement rates is one step you can take to ensure that good providers can continue caring for kids.

I urge you to support Raised Bill Number 7302. Thank-you.

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