

March 13, 2012
Labor and Public Employees Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 352

I'm Louise Smith, I live in Hartford and I've been doing daycare as a licensed provider through Care4Kids for 18 years. I care for 3 kids, right now from 10 months to 3 years old, and then I have 3 before and after school kids as well. I work from my home; from 6:30am to 6pm. That's why I can't make the hearing and am submitting this testimony as my voice.

We're not babysitters because we do the same thing as educators in childcare centers. We teach the children ABCs and 123s. We read to them during story time and teach them the difference between shapes, sizes and colors. We also take them on fieldtrips. We're professional childcare educators who provide a valuable service to our communities. We're open all the time, when school is out and centers are closed. We deserve the same recognition as early childhood education centers and Head Start programs.

We need improvements with Care4Kids so that the families who need access to childcare can go to work and we providers can be treated as the professionals we are.

I don't really have any problems with Care4Kids, but it could be improved. They need to be more responsible with parental paperwork because Care4Kids often loses the paperwork that I personally see parents send. Sometimes I even send it in for parents. It delays our paychecks. Direct deposit would be great for us childcare providers. If they could lower the parent co-pays and raise the subsidies, that would be better for everyone. The parents who qualify for Care4Kids can't afford any co-pay, especially not when their income is calculated pre-tax and not on what they bring home. We providers take a pay cut from the income that's on our invoices, which assumes we take their co-pays.

We childcare providers should be treated like real professionals and should have a say in our profession and with Care4Kids. We need access to medical insurance, vacation time, raises (I haven't had a raise since I started 18 years ago), paid sick days, deducted taxes, and access to educational trainings so we can better teach the children in our care. We deserve professional support and resources because we do provide a valuable service for children and families.

I want to see changes. We all – childcare providers with Care4Kids and the Care4Kids agency – need to sit down together and work it out. That's why I support my childcare providers union and collective bargaining. Please vote YES for SB 352.

Louise Smith
Hartford