

March 13, 2012
Labor Committee
In Support of S.B. 352

I am Ellen Valentine and I have been a family child care provider for 4 years in Bridgeport, Connecticut and I offer this testimony in support of S.B. 352. Since I opened up my small business in my home, I have struggled to maintain it for several reasons out of my control.

Many of the children who come to me are from Care 4 Kids. In the C4K system, it is very difficult for the parents to qualify for the program. This affects me in several ways; the longer it takes the parents to qualify, the longer I don't get paid for my services. Whenever I can, I take a chance and take care of a child who may or may not qualify for C4K. If they qualify I will get paid a few months later, if they don't, I take a loss and I don't receive a dime. Many of the C4K parents are hard-working but need assistance in order to go to work. Some parents do not qualify for full assistance and as a result, they have to pay a copay. Sometimes these parents cannot afford to pay the copay and I can take a loss. I can choose to not take a C4K child but times are very hard.

Many parents who can afford to pay out of pocket for child care do a lot of shopping around. They shop around within the family day care and large day care centers. We all do the same type of work and we should all make the same amount of money. We cannot keep working for free.

As a collective bargaining group, there will be less competition amongst the family child care providers because we will all be at the table. We all need to survive, and in order to do that we need to improve the communication amongst ourselves, C4K, the parents, and society as a whole.

There is a correlation between the parents, the providers and C4K; we are all working for the best interest of the children. The correlation between the family child care providers and society is that we are the first to influence the children who are the future. All the C4K providers need to go to the Capitol and team up with the legislators to make positive improvements in the C4K program. In the future, with our C4K providers union, we stand a better chance of getting better health insurance, higher subsidies, and a voice at the table. We will be able to negotiate better premiums, consistency in pay, with more input as a collective group rather than individuals. As a collective group we can achieve quality child care and be more involved in our profession. It will give us a voice that we need to have. I hope the governor will continue his support and that legislators will side with us to pass our bill.

Ellen Valentine
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