



ALL OUR KIN INC

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Oral Testimony from Christie Balka in Favor of HB 5121

"An Act Concerning Protections for Certain Group Child Care and Family Child Care Homes"

LCO #848

Connecticut General Assembly-Housing Committee

February 18, 2020

Good afternoon Representative McGee, Senator Anwar and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Christie Balka and I am All Our Kin's Policy Director. All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that trains and supports 40% of Connecticut's family child care providers, equipping them with the tools and resources to provide high-quality care and while running sustainable businesses.

Protecting and expanding family and group child care is a key strategy to increase the supply of licensed child care in Connecticut. This is what HB 5121, "An Act Concerning Protection for Certain Group Child Care and Family Child Care Homes" will do. I am here today to ask you to support HB 5121.

There was no fiscal note on this bill last year, and once again we expect there will be no additional burden on the state. By eliminating burdensome red tape, home-based child care providers will save money on costly legal fees. These providers are especially likely to be low-income women of color who do not have these resources.

HB 5121 closes the existing loophole that prevents group child care providers from having the same protections as family child care providers. It does this by amending three separate sections, 8-2, 8-3j, and 19a-80.

Section 8-2 already says that municipalities cannot prohibit family or group child care homes in residential zones. Sadly, this hasn't been sufficient to deter municipalities from requiring providers obtain special exceptions and permits. The end result has been a de facto ban on both family and group child care homes.

Promoting licensed, residential childcare in providers' homes results in significant benefits for:

- Children – especially infants and toddlers who receive safe, loving, nurturing care in licensed child care settings that meet state health and safety standards.
- Working Parents, that are able to participate in the workforce knowing that their children are learning.
- Small business entrepreneurs that increase their earnings and support the broader economy.

AND...

- The Economy. A University of Connecticut study found that for every \$1 invested in licensing family child care providers, \$15-\$20 was returned to the regional economy.

Family and group child care are particularly important for families that face the greatest barriers to accessing care. These are low-income families that do not have stable work schedules, those who work extended or odd hours, families of children with special needs and those without a reliable means of transportation.

Connecticut should follow the lead of New York and California in adopting stronger protections against zoning and housing restrictions for home-based child care.

HB 5121 is an important step in this direction. Protecting and expanding the supply of licensed, home-based child care is a big win not only for providers but for children, parents, employers and the state's economy. I urge you to support HB 5121.