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**Testimony Submitted by Emmanuella Lataure to the
Connecticut General Assembly - Housing Committee
February 18, 2020**

**HB 5121 "An Act Concerning Certain Protections
For Group and Family Child Care Homes"
LCO # 848**

Representative McGee, Senator Anwar and members of the Housing Committee, my name is Emmanuella Lauture and I am the owner of Ma Maison Childcare in Stamford, Connecticut. I have been a family child care educator and business owner for 7 years. I am licensed by the state of Connecticut through the Office of Early Childhood to care for young children in my home. The safe, nurturing, loving early care and education I provide is a critical support for children and families. I am writing in support of HB 5121: "An Act Concerning Certain Protections For Group and Family Child Care Homes".

From day one, I have strived to pursue training and education opportunities to make sure I am providing the highest quality care for the children in my program. My program is aligned with the CT Early Learning and Development standards, and I have been credentialed for my work in early childhood, receiving the Child Development Associate (CDA)--a widely recognized credential in my field. I am an active member of All Our Kin, a non-profit organization that supports and trains family child care educators like me. And, I am proud to say that I am weeks away from submitting my application for accreditation from the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) after months of training and attending classes. This accomplishment represents achieving nationally-recognized standards of quality in my program.

Because I am passionate about what I do, I am eager to expand my child care program, giving more children and families in my community access to high-quality

At that point, I had a waitlist of parents waiting to enroll their children in my program, and I was determined not to let them down. I decided to rent my primary home and move to a new home. It was a hard decision; I had lived in my first home for 15 years, ever since I was married, and I loved that home. But, I found the perfect new space, a single dwelling located on the corner of a quiet neighborhood, with an existing 4 parking spaces and 2 car garage, and a circular driveway which will allow parents to come and go from one end to another. In addition, it had a complete separate floor measuring more than 1600 square feet to run my child care! After compiling all the documents needed, my attorney once again submitted my application to the Zoning Board on January 31, 2018.

My application was denied again. A group of neighbors organized in opposition to my application, without ever talking to me to learn more about my background and my business. They stated misinformation about the impact a group child care would have on the neighborhood, and ignored evidence I provided about my qualifications and my business. But because the zoning process is so subjective, their opposition was enough to override my request, despite the fact that families in my community desperately need more licensed child care options. I was devastated.

This process has taken a toll on me and my child care business. After three hearings, two home purchases, and more than \$21,000 in legal fees, I have still not been able to open a group child care as a result of overburdensome local zoning processes-- even though I meet state licensing regulations! I had to close the waitlist for my child care program, and I lost families who had sent their older children to my program because I did not have vacancies for their infants. I spent additional money on a surveyor, engineer, renovations, and applications fees, all in support of my dream to expand my business. Child care businesses are a community asset; it should not be this difficult.