

My name is Joyce A. Berglund, and I have been a Family Child Care (FCC) provider in Carlton County for several years. It was a pleasure meeting with you previously to discuss the Modernization Draft. Alongside running my program, I serve as the FCC training and support group coordinator, advocating for providers and families across our community.

As a foster-to-adopt mother, I've encountered the unique challenges of dual licensing and navigating family rights. These experiences have deepened my understanding of the systemic barriers facing FCC providers.

Current regulations unintentionally penalize providers and create obstacles that hinder growth and stability. Below are critical concerns that I believe deserve immediate attention:

Key Issues

1. Counting Providers' Own Children in Ratios

FCC providers are penalized for including their own children in care ratios, reducing the slots available for income-generating placements. This policy discourages providers from continuing their work and undermines the sustainability of small, community-focused child care businesses.

2. Dual Licensing Challenges

Providers with foster care licenses face restrictions that further limit available slots, discouraging them from supporting foster children. Some counties, such as Carlton County, have even discontinued offering dual licensing altogether, excluding a vulnerable population of children from care.

3. Cost Prohibitive Factors

Rising costs for food, taxes, and increasingly stringent licensing requirements are driving FCC providers out of business. Carlton County, for instance, has seen a dramatic decline from 84 licensed providers in 2004 to just 32 today—clear evidence of the unsustainability of current policies.

4. Inconsistent Communication and County Support

The Department of Human Services (DHS) struggles with providing clear and actionable communication. Additionally, counties lack the funding and resources necessary to support providers adequately. Investments in county-level recruitment and licensing staff are urgently needed.

Proposed Reforms

- **Exclude providers' own children from licensing ratios** to allow FCC providers to support their families without limiting their business capacity.
- **Address dual licensing barriers** to encourage providers to care for foster children without reducing overall availability.
- **Allocate funding through DHS and DEED** to empower counties to recruit, retain, and support FCC providers.

I urge you to bring these critical issues to the committee hearing on January 22 and advocate for meaningful reforms that will enable FCC providers to thrive while meeting the needs of Minnesota's children and families.

Thank you for your dedication to this matter.

Sincerely,

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