

24 March 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Jackie Benoit-Petrich and I am the Executive Director of Civic League Day Nursery in Rochester. I am writing to voice my support of the childcare licensing reform bill SF2135 amendment. I was first introduced to childcare center licensing in 1991 when I was a teacher/owner of a preschool program. I've been the director at Civic League since 2015. During my long tenure in the early care and education (ECE) field, I have had many experiences with programs, facilities and licensing rules. I strongly support this bill amendment as I believe it will lead to a more and much needed collaborative approach between licensors and providers.

I want to make it clear that my main objective in regards to regulatory reform is what I just stated above, to create a collaborative approach *and* to use this approach for the upmost benefit for the children we serve. Also, for the record, I have a great relationship with my current Licensor and I feel I can call, email and visit with her, she is fair and helpful. Of course, I have had citations throughout my years and while some citations are necessary to flag things that are an immediate danger to a child, others seem to have no bearing on the quality care or safe environments of our centers. In my earlier years, I remember being cited for "The space was not clean" and "hazardous objects were available to children." What was the hazardous object? A toilet plunger in the corner of the bathroom. During those years a child couldn't be alone in the bathroom anyway so hardly would be able to touch or mouth said toilet plunger. We were cited and dutifully put the plunger in the locked utility closet. A few weeks later, one of our stools plugged, then overflowed with real "stool" spilling out. I needed to leave the child in the bathroom, his shoes and socks wet with toilet waste as it continued to run, go get the key, unlock the closet, get the plunger...do you see where this is going? What was more "hazardous" and more "unclean"? The plunger stored in the bathroom for quick access *or* human waste backing up all over the floor? Nine years ago, I had another "Hazardous object" violation. This time it was moist baby wipes. I had

come up with the idea of having them accessible for the OLDER children to clean up their art tables when finished painting or gluing. They are clearly labeled to be safe on human skin. We also use them at diapering of course but also for a gentle nose wipe if the nose has crusty boogies. 😊 So, the violation wasn't that we couldn't use them on the children nor that the children couldn't wipe their own tables. The violation was that the wipes were *accessible* to the children. An adult needs to physically pull the wipe out of the package and hand it to the child to wipe the table. The wipes cannot be on the art shelf for the child to pull out of the package themselves. The time and energy *on both the provider and licensors is exhausting* for these small and seemingly insignificant misdeeds.

I was once cited for "medication that was not properly stored." The culprit? Cherry Chapstick was in a 5-year-old child's cubby.

If we look at the wording of the citations in comparison what the actual offense was, the public citation can sound at best, that the program is subpar.

The new bill would allow for collaborative solutions for these minute discrepancies. I strongly support this bill and I thank you all for your consideration!

I also think it would be wonderfully supportive if in place of (or along with) citations, there would be a system of all the things *that were right with center*. "The center was clean and well organized." "The children were actively engaged in various activities" "staff and children were happy and engaged." There was an aire of joyfulness."

Very sincerely,

Jackie Benoit-Petrich, Executive Director
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