

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Renee Olsen-Gravelle and I fully support the child care licensing reform bill SF2135 amendment. I currently own and operate Little B's Learning Center in Barnum Minnesota going on 18 years. Within the past year, we opened a second site in a neighboring district (Willow River). I am familiar with licensing both for an older center and one operating under the "Early and Often" program. I am all for change and staying current on licensing procedures and policies. I feel like both of our centers strive to achieve the highest ratings possible, offering not only quality care, but also maintaining relationships with families and safety for children and staff as a priority.

With proposed changes, I feel as if providers have had little -to no- say in what is important to us or even what we also feel should be changed. I feel as if my relationship with Licensing should be a priority. For example, I have been at the Barnum center for almost 20 years (we had a center before moving here) and I've never had a licensor more than 3 visits. (I was close this year, but recently received an email she was re-assigned elsewhere). I feel like I am always having a new visitor with different opinions and always starting over building a relationship and asking questions. I would love to have some consistency and build a base so that when I have a concern or question the licensor knows our center and WHO we are. I love the relationships we build with our Parent Aware Coaches. We meet with them often (Similar to the "Early and Often" program. We are working towards building/maintaining quality and always feel very supported by them. If they have a concern, they work with to make it better. No judgments, all supportive. (I understand a violation is completely different and needs to be acted on accordingly). I believe we deserve the opportunity to question and ask guidance when the licensors visit. I feel strongly that we should be able to question their judgment when the rules are not black and white but a perspective area instead of clearly stated.

One of the changes/updates important to me is the use of Experienced Aides. I feel as if the staff is over 18, meets the requirements of your centers policies, and has the experienced required by the state that staff should be able to continue to Open and Close your center. A Lead teacher still runs the main part of the day but an aide - Experienced Aide is perfectly capable of opening and closing with the required ratios. This allows me as a center to maintain full time positions for teachers during the main operation of hours and get help to open/close from others who may not want full time (retired paraprofessionals in my exact case). They would be more likely in crisis situation to make responsible/ professional decisions that someone fresh out of college with a degree but little experience)

Again, I am in support for positive changes and updates, I just would appreciate my time and experience in the field be respected and included. I absolutely love what we do and who we are as a Center (s) and want to be on the same side as the State, not opposing teams.

Thank you for your time,

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