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My name is Monique Webb Stumon. I am the director of School Readiness Learning Academy in Minneapolis since 2009 and a leader with Kids Count On Us. I've been in the education field for 30 years and my passion is all about supporting children throughout their most important years of development. I am here today to urge you to create a bill that helps us support our youngest Minnesotans and their families.

Early childhood learning programs help our communities by providing families with learning tools to help our children be successful in their learning journey. We are the bridge to give children a better start in life. It is crucial that this bill supports providers instead of working against them, while also maintaining high standards in the safety of the children.

We are currently under outdated childcare systems that often create obstacles that are quite frankly unnecessary and out of touch with the actual circumstances of caring for children. This current system often makes it hard for providers to best serve their families, by continually adding and never taking away any outdated systems and practices for example.

During our last licensing visit at one of our locations, the licensor verbally exclaimed that the space was exceptionally clean, however on the correction order we received, it stated that 'the program's space was not clean'. I called my licensor and asked them to further explain the citation and I was told that it was due to an unflushed toilet. Keep in mind that both of SRLA's locations are 4 star rated and nationally accredited and we follow the national accreditation cleaning criteria.

In order to create a framework that encourages providers rather than penalizes them, this law is an essential first step. The emphasis should be shifted from regulatory constraints to the people who are at the center of our work. Children deserve our best and adults who look after them should have a system that encourages their efforts rather than gets in the way.

Monique Webb Stumon, CEO  
School-Readiness Learning Academy {SRLA}  
"A Better Start For Young Minds"