

Laurie Fletcher, Childcare Business Owner
Fletcher Home Childcare
800 Shawmut Ct NW
Grand Rapids MI 49504
616-822-5931

Chairwoman Crawford and Members of the Family, children and seniors committee,
Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide my testimony on house Bills 5975, 5976 & 5977.

My name is Laurie Fletcher. I am the owner of a State licensed home based group childcare that opened nearly 25 years ago. I am also honored to help mentor and facilitate personal and professional connections with a large group of over 200 Licensed West Michigan Childcare providers. This group of childcare providers have had similar discussions on these subjects many times over the years.

I am in support of these proposed bills.

While I have never been cited for being out of ratio or over my child count, I am an employer, so I would like to address House Bill 5975 from that perspective.

Childcare providers are consistently low paid and are working ever increasingly longer hours. Childcare profit margins have always been razor-thin.

I have heard that referenced in the media and in many meetings with community agencies supporting childcare programs often in these past few months. I believe when we consider the current landscape of the childcare industry these words have never been truer.

Early Childhood is currently at-risk of losing thousands of childcare spaces if the childcare industry cannot fully recover because center and in-home licensed programs are permanently closing for a variety of reasons related to Covid-19 and the global pandemic.

Our States economic success coming out of the current crisis is directly tied to working families having access to safe and reliable childcare to return to.

As a group childcare provider the addition of two care spaces has a direct impact on my ability to significantly increase revenue realized from tuition income for the first time in almost 25 years. This would allow me to use that income to attract and retain a reliable and well educated employee. With the addition of two available care spaces I could provide my assistant with a living wage. That is one employment benefit that my industry has been sorely lacking for quite some time.

House Bill 5975 would go far helping me to attract the best assistant for my program. Low employee turnover enables me as the program director to better retain families enrolled for childcare.

We also know this would foster an emotionally healthy environment for the children when they form strong, consistent connections with their caregivers.

You have before you today the opportunity to make changes that will help established and invested licensed childcare providers in Michigan to expand an essential business in their communities. This bill would be the catalyst to create thousands of additional care spaces statewide at exactly the right time to help working families and our economy to recover. It could

also help create higher paying occupations for those who choose to work in the Early Childhood licensed childcare profession.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you on this matter this morning. I welcome any questions that the committee may have for me at this time.

Signed-Laurie Fletcher