

Thank You Senator Brisport, Chief Clark, & Senate Standing Committee on Children & Families, for the opportunity to give my testimony.

My name is Rosalyn Cheatom. I'm the owner of Our Family Daycare. Our Family Daycare is open 24 hours a day, Monday-Sunday, in the heart of the African-American Community, Buffalo's East Side for more than 20 years. I am a member of the Workforce Solution Consortium, and the WNY Child Care Action Team.

This is MY Testimony

New York's child care businesses are in a crisis more NOW than ever before. Pre-Pandemic we faced staffing challenges, and low cost of care subsidy payments. Now, Post-Pandemic, we are facing the same concerns mentioned above in addition to more that have arisen. Additional concerns now include inflation, the ability to maintain our staff and the possibility of hiring additional staff to fulfill the child care desert needs.

It has been said that Quality Child Care is Essential. It is also a necessity so that parents are reassured that their children are being cared for in a safe nurturing environment. All parents need that sense of security; whether they're furthering their education or employed.

I started My Child Care Business 21 years ago when my first child was just four years old. Today I have three children and I am operating an in-home Child Care Business. It is my duty and responsibility to provide quality child care to parents so that they can earn substantial wages which allows them to financially support their families. As a provider and parent I struggle to provide for my family because my child care is 100% subsidized and underpaid.

To operate any Child Care business today we are faced with 3 major concerns: inflation, staffing to child ratios, and low wages.

We have seen a recent rise in the amount people are having to pay for mortgages, rent, application fees to rent apartments, along with homeowners and rental insurance. The increase of basic necessities such as food, toiletries and household items post pandemic is astronomical. The cost of gas to operate a motor vehicle and for those that rely on public transportation have also seen a drastic increase in cost. We are experiencing increases in the amount we have to pay for utilities that are needed in the homes or apartments such as electric, gas and water. Daycare providers are having to pay increased cost for state required insurances which are daycare general & liability coverage. Not and increase cost but mandated Workers Compensation and Paid Family Leave cost as well.

Not being able to meet regulatory staff to child ratio is the main reason for the decrease in child care availability. The slots ARE available. We can not fulfill the child care desert without quality staff.

Child care teachers are not interested in returning to low paying positions let alone those that do not offer benefits. We must be able to offer better wages, health insurance, retirement plans, and pensions just to be able to level the playing field with major corporations.

We can not continue to do our jobs on what we are currently being paid.

Addressing these concerns are as follows:

- 1. Set subsidy reimbursement rates based on actual operating costs**
- 2. Pay providers based on enrollment**
- 3. Increase use of contracts and grants**
- 4. Invest in the workforce**
- 5. Support development of shared services alliances and family child care networks**
- 6. Engage stakeholders to develop a vision for universal child care**

Thank You,
Roselyn Cheatom,