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January 29, 2020
Re: SB312

Dear Senators,

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding SB312. I come to you as a licensed family child care provider and on behalf of the Child Care Provider Coalition of Kansas. I operate my facility in my home in Olathe and have worked diligently to maintain my license since 2013. Serving the board of CCPC as Advocacy Chairperson allows me to support my colleagues. This bill helps me feel supported and heard by my legislators.

Early childhood is a crucial time period and the professionals who specialize in the growth and teaching of young children recognize the need for qualified persons to provide such care. Many of us have worked together to create a field of providers who believe in the mission of supporting the children and families in our programs. However, our goals and desires for families are harmed by people who operate illegally.

A person who is willing to operate an illegal daycare does not desire the best for the ultimate good. Children are at greater risk when a person does not comply with law and operates illegally. When children have been hurt or killed in illegal environments it is those of us motivated to promote the child care field that unfairly must shoulder the burden to mend the damage done in their wake. The bill before you helps us reduce that unfair burden.

In 2017 Kingston Gilbert was severely hurt not far from my home in Olathe. His provider, Paige Hatfield, was unlicensed. His life is forever changed, not by a tragic accident, but by terrible actions toward a child. The loss felt by his family is unnecessary. The loss the provider's family must live with should have been avoided. There is no way of knowing now how different life could look both for his family and hers had proper supports been in place.

Licensed providers have access to networking opportunities to combat the feelings of isolation and monotony that we face. When we gather for training courses, we are able to support each other, brainstorm ideas for our programs, and refresh ourselves when we connect with other providers. Because of the work the licensed provider is willing to do, we offer stronger, safer services which are more in line with practices that serve the children and families best. Professional organizations like Child Care Provider Coalition of Kansas joins with the Kansas network of child care resource and referral agencies and other partners to offer licensed family child care providers supports.

Although safety for children is the highest of all priorities, it is not alone in further reasons to support SB312. The people obtaining Family Child Care licenses are entrepreneurs with the ability to positively affect their local economy. When large national companies learn that their employees will be more likely to find consistent, quality care in an area of Kansas they may be more likely to bring their business to less populated areas of Kansas providing a larger economic stimulus to the region. SB312 is as much a small business stimulus opportunity as it is a health and safety issue.

Support the licensed family child care provider in Kansas who believes fervently in her skills and chosen profession. Create a bill that renders illegal daycare operation unappealing and cost prohibitive. Partner with the force of providers working diligently to expect a professional standard. Give Kansas a legitimate means of stimulating small business growth.

I appreciate the time granted to me today. Thank you for the opportunity to promote my professional field that I care for dearly. I look forward to the opportunity to support you as you create and pass SB312 to support the licensed family child care provider and the families receiving her care.

Kind Regards,

Emily M Barnes
Owner, Barnes Childcare
Advocacy Chairperson, Child Care Provider Coalition of Kansas