

House Human Services Committee

SB 2304

March 16, 2005

Chairman Price and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Corinne Bennett. I serve as the administrator of early childhood services for the Department of Human Services. I am here today to provide testimony on SB 2304.

My concern with the bill as it currently reads is that the bills falls short of requiring the newly defined drop-in child care facilities to become licensed.

According to N.D.C.C. § 50-11.1-02(5), “child care provided in facilities operated in connection with a church, shopping center, business, or other establishment where children are cared for during periods of time not exceeding four continuous hours while the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian is attending church services, shopping, or engaged in other activities, other than employment, on or near the premises” is exempt from licensure.

The Department would prefer to continue exempting from licensure the following drop-in child care facilities connected with a church, shopping center, or business. However, the Department feels it is important for the health and safety of children to license drop-in child care facilities that do not fit into an exempted category.

It is my understanding that you are also in receipt of requested changes from Wonder Years Child Care facility in Grand Forks. The Department supports those recommended proposed changes.

If the committee wishes to proceed with licensure of drop-in facilities, the Department would ask that the committee consider allowing the

Department to develop rules, with the assistance of providers, for those facilities related to employment, by July 1, 2006.

The benefits, for parents of requiring this type of facility, to be licensed include:

- **Assurance that minimum health and safety issues are addressed including:
 - a) **A fire inspection, and health and sanitation inspection,**
 - b) **A child protection background check and sexual offender background check of the staff, and**
 - c) **A child to staff ratio.****
- **Access to child care assistance.**
- **Assistance in finding openings through the referral system of Child Care Resource and Referral Office.**

The benefits, for facilities of requiring this type of facility, to be licensed include:

- **Access to Child Care Food Program reimbursements.**
- **Referrals from Child Care Resource and Referral.**
- **Qualified parents can receive child care assistance for the care provided by their facility.**

If the committee does not want to pursue licensing for certain drop-in child care facilities, the Department asks the committee to consider, for clarification, an amendment that seeks to change the definition for “drop-in care” that would limit the four continuous hours of care to be within twenty-four hours time period.

I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee members may have. Thank you.