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PUBLIC HEARING

before

GENERAL ASSEMBLY TASK FORCE ON CHILD CARE

"To focus on identifying problems and issues relating  
to child care which can be addressed by the  
Legislative and Executive Branches"

February 14, 1991  
Georgian Court College  
Little Theatre  
Lakewood, New Jersey

MEMBERS OF TASK FORCE PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Marlene Lynch Ford, Chairman  
Assemblywoman Ann A. Mullen

ALSO PRESENT:

Norma Svedosh  
Office of Legislative Services  
Aide, General Assembly Task  
Force on Child Care

\* \* \* \* \*

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## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The General Assembly Task Force on Child Care will hold a public hearing on Thursday, February 14, 1991 from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. at the Georgian Court College, Little Theatre, Lakewood, N.J.

The hearing will focus on identifying problems and issues relating to child care which can be addressed by the Legislature and the Executive Branch.

*The public may address comments and questions to Norma Svedosh, Task Force Aide and persons wishing to testify should contact Pamela Chisolm, secretary, at (609) 292-1646. Those persons presenting written testimony should provide 10 copies to the task force on the day of the hearing.*

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN MARLENE LYNCH FORD (Chairman): We will get started now. This is the second public hearing of the General Assembly Task Force on Child Care. We have been selected and designated by the Speaker of the General Assembly to hold hearings throughout the State on the issue of the availability of child care and the affordability of child care, and to come back to the Legislature to report and make recommendations to the Legislature as to what action, if any, we can take to address this problem, which apparently is at crisis proportions.

We had a previous hearing on December 4 at the Labor Education Center at Rutgers - The State University. We heard from a number of people representing the interests of child care, representing the Department of Human Services, the Department of Community Affairs, and so forth. We have a transcript of that public hearing available. If any members of the public or interested parties would like one, we do have some copies available here.

I have a number of people who would like to testify. The purpose of this, of course-- It is a public hearing. We are here to listen to the public to get some input as to what direction we should go in, in your opinions. So please share with us whatever experiences or expertise you have.

I expect a couple of other members of my Committee to arrive later on. But since we do not need a quorum to start, we are going to start now in the interest of all of you who are on time. I would like to introduce my colleague from Gloucester Township, Mayor of Gloucester Township and Assemblywoman, Ann Mullen, who is on the end there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Good morning, everyone.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: To my right is Norma Svedosh, who is with the Office of Legislative Services.

Ceil Zalkind, Association for Children of New Jersey?

C E I L    Z A L K I N D: Good morning, Assemblywoman Ford and Assemblywoman Mullen. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I represent the Association for Children of New Jersey, which is a statewide child advocacy organization. We are concerned with many issues that impact on the children of our State, including child care, and have been involved in advocacy around child care issues for a long time. We are one of the members of the State Child Care Advisory Council and have worked on a great deal of legislation concerning child care.

I have a statement this morning, but I do not have a written statement to hand in. I would be very glad to prepare that and send it into the Committee later for the record.

I want to talk very briefly about some of the overall issues, although I believe you have heard those from many other people at your first hearing, and will hear about them today from people who are child care providers, consumers, people who have much more expertise on the provision of child care services than we do.

What I would like to address in my testimony are some of the larger policy issues and to really spend some time talking about the recent Federal legislation that will bring significant child care dollars to our State. We feel very strongly that this Committee and the legislative body in general have a very strong role in providing oversight to make sure that the Federal Act is implemented successfully in our State; that the funds are used appropriately and are targeted for the most needy clients; and also that we maximize the use of the fund to get as much out of the money as possible.

In general, I think you have probably heard many, many issues in the first testimony -- at the first hearing, and will hear other testimony today. From our point of view, the issues remain the same. It wasn't too long ago -- maybe five or six years ago -- that we testified before another Assembly Child



Care Task Force. Basically, in looking back on our testimony, not much has changed. Things like availability, affordability, and accessibility of child care are the same. Parents in our State who work and need child care for young children have difficulty finding child care, finding it close enough to their homes to meet their needs so that they can work, and finding it affordable. In the current economic climate, I think affordability is going to become a major issue in our State.

I think these issues apply to all types of child care, from family day-care for very young children to center-based care to before and after school care for school-age children. In addition to these broad issues, there are still many special issues that have not been addressed in any comprehensive way in our State. There is still the major issue about child care for children who are ill whose parents still need to go to work; issues about vacation care and holiday care when school is not in session; and issues around child care for teen parents. Our State has never taken on a major initiative. There have been pockets of very successful programs throughout the State, but none really looking comprehensively at the child care needs of teen parents so they can continue and finish school.

I think these are issues that you will hear about in much detail from people who know the ins and outs of this much better than we do.

In looking back on what has happened since child care has become an issue in our State, I would have to say that not much has been done in a comprehensive way. We really have to question our State commitment to child care. We look back on Governor Kean's legacy. It was very small in the child care area. There was a small school-age child care program implemented. The Family Day-Care Registration Act that many of us advocated for had its funding cut during the legislative process, which made it not as effective as it could have been. The Urban Pre-K Program was a much subsidized and publicized

program. We have not heard much about what has happened to the four or six districts that were selected for the Urban Pre-K.

We are also very concerned about the first year of the Florio administration. Governor Florio, last year, publicized his intentions of implementing a Good Start program, and set aside, we believe, \$5 million in this budget year. We are more than halfway through this fiscal year, and we have not heard about how that program is going to be implemented, where that money is going to go, and how it is going to be used.

There has been tremendous advocacy in our State to expand Head Start -- in our State and states across the country. In fact, the ACNJ participates in the Invest in Children Coalition, which is a business coalition -- corporations and businessmen who are advocating to expand Head Start. We are still in the unfortunate position of having less than 20% of eligible children receiving Head Start services in our State, despite much evidence that this is a very successful program with long-term positive advantages for children. We have not seen any expansion of vouchers or any other kinds of subsidy for low-income families. We are very discouraged that the excellent recommendations of the Child Care Advisory Council and their comprehensive look at child care services in New Jersey were virtually ignored. Some of their recommendations we hoped to see in legislation, and there has been very little activity on that.

That is the climate we see in looking at the Federal moneys coming into our State. We are very concerned that in view of budgetary problems this year, the Federal money is going to be the only child care money available for expansion and to address some of these issues that we, and I am sure other people, will raise with you.

I do want to focus most of my comments around the Federal legislation. Very briefly, the Child Care and Development Block Grant-- I have to give the Committee an

excellent report prepared by the Children's Defense Fund, which analyzes the elements of the bill and lays out some important steps for oversight and advocacy. I will be glad to give that to you after my testimony. The Child Care Development Block Grant will bring \$14.3 million to New Jersey in September, and another \$15.8 million in October. It is in some ways a unique block grant because it requires no State matching funds. It has some restrictions, however, on the money. A very important one is that the funds must be used to supplement existing child care expenditures, not to supplant State expenditures or Federal support.

Use of the funds is somewhat flexible. Seventy-five percent is geared to making child care more affordable, or to improve the quality and availability of all types of child care programs. Twenty-five percent of the money is geared toward improving quality and availability specifically for school-age child care and early childhood development programs.

Income eligibilities for families accessing assistance for child care are relatively high. Eligible families have to have an income that is below 75% of the State median income, so we are talking about a very broad population of people.

We think this is going to be the major source of child care money in our State for the next five years. In fact, we hope it is not, but we think it might be the only source of increased funds, and believe that this body and the Legislature in general have some very strong oversight functions in following through on the implementation of this money.

I have four points I would like to make with regard to that oversight: One is that one of the things that is required for this money to be given to New Jersey is a comprehensive State plan. This plan has to be developed. The Governor has to designate a body to develop a State plan for how the money is going to be allocated and used. We are very concerned about the process in developing this plan. We don't think it is

necessary to reinvent the wheel. The Child Care Advisory Council did an excellent report about three years ago. Many of the recommendations in there, I think, could be a starting off point for the development of the State plan. We think that report addresses the key issues in child care, and we would like to see that report and the activities of the Child Care Advisory Council, which is a body that represents every aspect of child care, different types of child care, consumers, and early childhood education. It's a body that represents everyone involved in child care. They are an excellent resource in developing this State Plan.

We would also like to see the State plan come out for enough time for a meaningful review. With the first Federal money coming in September, we would like to have an opportunity, and have other entities have an opportunity, to review and comment on the plan. We think it is very important that it be reviewed by the Child Care Advisory Council, by some of the county entities, such as the county Human Services Advisory Councils that funnel some of the existing block grant moneys for child care.

The Federal legislation requires at least one public hearing on the State plan, and we think that this Task Force could be key in making sure that those hearings happen and are meaningful, so that we can have comment on the plan and can have a plan that is the best possible one for New Jersey.

Our second issue involves the designation of an appropriate lead agency to funnel the Federal moneys. The Federal legislation requires the Governor to pick a lead agency in the State to administer the Federal child care moneys. The legislation indicates that the agency should be an agency that is existing at the time of the legislation, and with some expertise in the administration of child care programs.

Now, we have had no indication about which agency is going to be the lead agency. We feel very strongly that this



should be the Department of Human Services. They have a track record in child care. They have administered the child care programs in our State, and we feel this is an appropriate entity to handle this funding. We think it would be very helpful to encourage, or require the Department, if it is designated as the lead agency, to coordinate with other entities in the State, such as the Department of Education, as well as local and county entities such as the Human Services Advisory Councils. But we think Human Services is the appropriate lead agency.

Our third issue involves the concern about making sure that the money is used to supplement, and not supplant existing funding. Again, we feel that this Task Force has a key oversight role. The Children's Defense Fund Report, which I am going to share with you, makes some recommendations as a first step toward having a body such as yours do a survey about exactly what money is being provided for child care right now on the State and the Federal levels in New Jersey, and then use that as a baseline to ensure that the Federal moneys coming to our State in the fall are used to expand and increase child care expenditures in our State.

There is a great sensitivity about this. New Jersey, like many other states, is facing serious budgetary issues, and there is great concern that the money be used in addition to money that is being expended now, not to replace existing money. We think this Task Force is a terrific body to make sure that that happens.

Our last recommendation around the implementation of the Federal money is the issue of setting priorities so that the money gets to the poorest families. As I mentioned, the Federal law says that families eligible for child care assistance under the Federal law have a pretty high income level. They can earn up to 75% of the State median income. However, the legislation does not preclude states from setting more restrictive eligibility requirements.

We feel it is very important that New Jersey, at least initially, target the neediest families, the families that really need help with child care assistance, and to make sure that they receive assistance through the Federal money before expanding the program to families with higher incomes. It is very possible that the money could be used for families above the poverty level, for example, but we would like to see the State start with the targeted group of families which are the neediest in our State. Once they are served, use the remaining money to expand to families with higher income levels.

My last area of comment addresses something separate from the Federal legislation, but it does have some impact on some of the Federal legislation as well. We are very concerned about the capital needs of the child care community in our State. We feel this is an area that has been seriously ignored over the last several years. There have been no initiatives at all to address the capital needs of child care providers in our State. We think this is very important and a timely issue right now, because the Federal legislation says that none of that money can be used for capital. Now, that is going to limit what kind of expansion can go on. If you can use the money for program expansion, facilities need also to expand buildings -- purchase buildings, renovate buildings. Capital is going to be a very serious issue.

We were discouraged to find out that the 1989 Human Services Bond Act does not apply to child care. It has been targeted primarily through the legislation for the mentally ill and the developmentally disabled. We had hoped that there would be some money available through that Bond Act for child care capital needs. We haven't seen many initiatives in this area. We have a couple of suggestions that perhaps might be interesting to address the capital needs.

There has been tremendous discussion over the last few weeks with the planning that is going on for the 1989 Bond Act

money, that there is Bond Act money remaining in the Department of Human Services from prior bond acts; in fact, some bond acts dating back to the early 1970s. We think it would be very interesting to find out if this is true and what this money is targeted for. An example that we heard was that money was targeted for a building at one of the State psychiatric facilities that is going to be closed. If this money is available and going unspent, can it be redirected for child care capital needs? Is legislation necessary to redirect that money? That may be existing money that we can access.

We have also been very interested in some legislation that is pending that would address capital needs. Senator Russo has a bill -- S-33 -- with Assemblywoman Bush's A-2308, which would set up a \$2 million revolving grant fund for capital needs of child care facilities. We would like to see this legislation passed. We understand that bills with appropriations have not fared well over the last few months. This is a very small amount of money for the impact we think it can have.

Senator Lipman has Senate Bill No. 2097, and Assemblywoman Bush has Assembly Bill No. 2308, which is a similar bill, except that it appropriates \$4 million to set up a revolving loan fund for child care centers needing to borrow to meet capital needs. Several other states have implemented funds like this and they have been very successful. We would like to see these two bills passed.

However, we think they are going to have some limited impact. There are some child care centers which would not be able to afford to pay back loans, and really need grants or direct appropriations for capital needs. We wonder if there has ever been any thought given to a bond act for child care needs? You know, we have had bond acts which have focused on schools, on prisons, on human services facilities both in the community and State facilities. What about a bond act for

child care? It might be one that could be financially realistic, not one requiring millions and millions of dollars. It might have some provisions to make sure that the money is used for child care and the entity stays in the business of child care for a sufficient amount of time. We would encourage this body to consider that as a proposal.

That concludes my comments. If you have any questions, I would be glad to answer them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: I just have a question, Ceil: You indicated that the money from the Federal government be prioritized for the lowest income people. Obviously, you know, I think we all have empathy for the poor. What I often hear is that when you are low income enough, you qualify for subsidized child care. When you are the working poor person, you know, the person who is barely getting by, is working and therefore doesn't qualify for various programs, that that is really the segment that is being hit. Do you agree with that?

MS. ZALKIND: I absolutely agree with that. There is other Federal legislation connected with the Family Support Act, which will increase funding for child care for families involved in the REACH program. I think you are talking about families that can access that kind of money. I think what we are interested in is exactly the group of families you have described, the working poor, who are not eligible for those types of State and Federal programs, are not part of REACH, who can't access that child care money. But by the time they work at minimum wage and pay child care, they are not left with much money. I think that is exactly the population we would like to target, or at least start with.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Madam Chairman, I do have one question. Ceil, you mentioned about providing facilities to encourage our young teenage parents to continue their high school education. I just want to share something with you: I was very excited about that and offered, on behalf of our



township, an empty library building adjacent to our high school for that purpose. I thought that would be ideal. You know, it would be a learning experience for students, and at the same time provide sheltered care for their children.

Unfortunately, the school came back and said that they really felt they could not get involved with infant children because of the liability purposes. I don't know how we are going to get around that particular problem. I don't know whether they would consider toddlers, but I doubt very much if there are teenage students who have children three or four years old. Do you see any solution to that problem?

MS. ZALKIND: Well, Senator DiFrancesco has had a bill which has been pending for quite some time, a small grant program, a million dollar appropriation. In discussions around that bill, we were able to talk with some entities in Elizabeth and in Newark that provide child care support to the public schools. In both of those programs it is not the school that runs the program, but it is contracted with a child care agency. So it is not the school that has the liability or the responsibility to administer the program, but a child care provider, a child care center, which runs and administers the program. I think in other communities that has been fairly successful.

There are some innovative and exciting programs in our State. There just hasn't been the funding to expand them. There has been a lot of discussion about whether we should provide child care to teen parents. We feel very strongly that that is really important. At one of the hearings when Senator DiFrancesco's bill was discussed, we brought a young woman from Newark who talked about her commitment to finish high school, and how difficult it was for her to commute on three buses, for an hour each way, to bring her daughter to the child care center and then go to school. She was very committed to finishing school. When she found this program, even with the

difficulties in getting there, it was the thing that kept her in school. We hope that more people will listen to children like that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Sue Kullman, Ocean County Foster Parents Association?

S U E K U L L M A N: Good morning. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to this Committee Task Force and also to thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of children and families.

My name is Sue Kullman. I am President of the Ocean County Foster Parents Association. I also serve as President of the New Jersey Foster Parents Association. I am a foster and adoptive parent from Lakewood, New Jersey. Your efforts, and those of many others, have helped to make some positive changes, but all of us here know there is still a great need for improving services and programs which would:

- \* Enable families to stay together.

- \* Ensure that out-of-home placements are the least restrictive and most appropriate.

This Task Force hearing focuses on several very important child care issues. Our positions and/or recommendations are, in the area of preserving families and preventing placement: We strongly support any and all appropriate programs which would prevent the out-of-home placement of children, help reunify families, or find permanent homes for children. More affordable and available day-care situations are needed, and more creative day-care, such as on-site day-care in the workplace.

On improving the quality of out-of-home care in child care: A significant number of women have entered the work force to help with family finances. We are recruiting more and more foster parents where the woman also works. Therefore, we

are obliged to use day-care centers and home day-care providers. We urge this Committee to recognize the need for more qualified, safe day-care facilities. We recommend that you support:

- \* Assembly Bill No. 1684, which requires DYFS to investigate persons applying to be registered family day-care providers.

- \* Assembly Bill No. 1741, which requires criminal history background checks on certain child care workers.

- \* Assembly Bill No. 538, which requires criminal history record background checks on prospective child care employees.

As foster parents, we are fingerprinted and must have police checks, both local and FBI. Then we must leave these children with day-care providers who are not required to follow these same checks. We are concerned for the safety of the children and our responsibility while they are under our care.

We would also like to emphasize the need for another program, if we are to improve the quality of out-of-home care. Everyone seems to acknowledge the fact that children coming into foster care have many more severe physical and/or emotional problems. They can be very difficult to care for, and demand much more attention. Yet foster parents continue to be the only child care providers who are expected to work seven days a week, 365 days a year, with no time off.

We would like this Committee to seriously consider a respite care program for foster parents. This type of program would retain foster homes and help prevent children from moving from home to home.

We have been able to make positive changes in New Jersey that will help children and families, but most services and programs have not kept up with today's problems. Nor have they been funded at a level that would make them effective.

We appreciate your interest and concern, and in closing we thank you again for your efforts on behalf of children and families.

Do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Sue, first of all I want to commend all the people you represent. I think foster parents are very, very special people, taking children who, as you said, oftentimes have a multiple of problems, into their homes. I think what you are telling us is that foster parents are like any other parents. They work, maybe part-time, full-time, and they have the same type of care needs -- respite care needs -- probably respite care separate and independent from day-care needs that most parents have.

Although I know that you don't get into foster care for the money, most people do have some type of responsibility, especially in these times, to supplement their income. So we certainly appreciate your coming in and reminding us of that aspect of what it is we are looking into today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Sue, I just want to ask you a question, too. There is a bill being worked on right at this time with a large group of people -- and you might be aware of it -- with regard to certified day-care providers, which we are very interested in. It is a bill which would do away with local zoning and allow folks to have this service in their homes.

One of the components of the bill is the very thing that you had to go through, the background checks, both State and Federal. That seems to be, right at this point, a stumbling block because of the cost. You know, there are several folks who are involved with the bill who feel very strongly about it. As a foster parent, do you pay that cost yourself, or does DYFS pick that up?

MS. KULLMAN: If we become day-care providers?



ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: No, as a foster parent. You stated you have to be fingerprinted and must have police checks.

MS. KULLMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. DYFS pays the costs of fingerprinting and police checks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Oh, DYFS pays for that. Interesting. I appreciate that information. I congratulate you, also.

MS. KULLMAN: Okay. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Dana Berry, Director, Union City Day Care Center.

D A N A B E R R Y: Good morning. I very much appreciate the opportunity to come before you today. I think what you are doing is marvelous, necessary, and timely.

Before I get into the text of what I want to present today, I also want to thank you, as legislators, for the courage in enacting controversial legislation last year. It was necessary in order for us to be able to even have these kinds of hearings today that need to address the issues of child care and families in the State of New Jersey. I am very well aware that you have been under a lot of attack from a lot of different systems and a lot of different sectors, and I say "thank you." I hope the courage you showed in your first year in office will continue. This is an indication that apparently it is continuing. There is a lot of good stuff made of our Legislature at this point, because you are going--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Not to interrupt you, but some people would suggest that there is a fine line between courage and stupidity. (laughter)

MS. BERRY: I understand that. From where I sit, which is working in an inner city area in Union City, and from where I live in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, you know, there are different spectrums. It is very interesting the conversations I have with my neighbors in Upper Montclair, and it is very interesting the conversations I have with my

neighbors in Union City. Sometimes I find that we are really not that far apart, particularly when it comes to taking care of our children.

There is a growing recognition that we must take care of our children and our families -- our young families now -- if we are to survive as a total State citizenry.

Not only do I work with the children and families of Union City as the Director of the Union City Day Care Center, but I also sit on the Commission of Employment and Training. That is an education in itself. That is very broadening. The task of that commission is to help the Governor and the Legislature develop a viable work force by the year 2000. In that capacity I have sat through public hearings, and one of the main points that has come out at each of the public hearings, that certainly has not been put forward by me in my child care advocacy hat, has been the need to have the workers who are going to make up the mainstay of our child care work force have viable alternatives for child care. We are talking about entry level, as well as those who are going into training, as well as those who are further along.

So again, I think your task of looking at what we need to do on the larger spectrum for our State, is very timely, and thank you.

Robert Menendez happens to sit on the Board of Directors of the Union City Day Care Program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: He also sits on this Task Force.

MS. BERRY: Yes. Hello, Robert! I should have picked him up this morning maybe.

When we were speaking a bit about the emphasis that we wanted to go on, one of the things he wanted me to share with you is how Union City has expanded from being a day-care center into becoming a child care and family service network program that serves as a national model on three different levels.

Number one, we have received national accreditation from the National Academy of Education of Young Children, which is the accreditation arm of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. To my colleagues in the audience, this is not meant to be a braggadocio. It is meant to be a statement of the hard work that we felt we wanted to do as a voluntary organization to gain this accreditation, so that when we come before groups like you we can say, "We have gone through this process. We know what quality child care is composed of."

In that, we were the eleventh in the State of New Jersey. We were not the first in our State to go for that, but we were the eleventh. In the nation, we are the only one of our kind to have achieved that, in that we are two-sited -- we have two separate sites; we are multicultural; and we are bilingual in our program. Additionally, we have a family day-care component that is satellited off from our program which takes care of infants and toddlers in other homes. That is an interesting marriage of the family day-care system and the center-base system, and it works very well.

The other area where we have been noted as being a model is the older worker, paraprofessional training program we have developed because we did not have a viable labor force, particularly for our aide network. In our community, which is largely urban, we began looking around. Our demographics allowed us to see that there were a great number of older people who had perhaps retired, but who were sitting around not doing much with their time. When we got together with our local Job Training Partnership Act people from our Jersey City and our Hudson County Employment and Training Program, and with the Division on Aging's Older American Workers' money, we partnershiped -- a new word, isn't it, partnershiped, that we are now using? We developed a partnership wherein the day-care center provides paraprofessional training that is funded

through the JTPA to older workers. "Older workers" in this partnership are people who are 55 and older. To my way of thinking, 55 is getting closer, but it is not that old anymore. But that is what the Federal law states as being an older worker. That allows people 55 and older to come and to receive a stipend of minimum wage while they undergo training, and then to be put into subsidized placement for six months. Then they go into unsubsidized placement, so that there is movement along the way.

We have found that our program has been immeasurably enriched by bringing in the older generation to meet with the younger generation. It is the magic of two groups coming together. As a Director who is very often stressed out and overwrought, I find myself kind of coddling up to some of our older workers to get some of that nurturing through osmosis. Perhaps because the older worker has gone through life and is not involved in all the stresses which those of us who are in our mid-life and parenthood lives are, they come to us refreshed and able and ready to concentrate and to listen to the needs of our children. They are a very viable, very exciting group of people to work with.

The third reason we are quoted as being a national model -- and this is perhaps what you would like to talk to me about later -- is that we are one of two grantees that have received Even Start moneys. The Feds have a lot of Even Start moneys at this point. There is actually going to be a training program in Princeton for Even Start applicants. This is a Federal initiative that is trying to bring together those women -- young parents, it can be fathers also -- who have had to drop out of school because of becoming parents. They have not received any further formal education. This program allows them to go back, depending on the model that is developed, either into a GED program with child care, which is how we provide it, or perhaps going back, having child care, through

an academic course at a high school. You talk about your library. I see Even Start right out there in the front. Perhaps we should talk later, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: I would be glad to.

MS. BERRY: I am going to talk quickly and briefly, because there might be some questions that you might wish to address to me, about two areas of concern: One is, as the Director of a Social Service Block Grant agency, we are, indeed, fighting for our survival. We were, indeed, developed by the Bureau of Child Care way back in the mid-'70s, when this State was extremely progressive in its approach to children. New Jersey was one of the first states in the nation to have licensing. It had regional offices. It was very exciting.

Something has happened since the mid-'70s to just recently. You are bringing back a lot of hope. I see a lot of progressiveness coming out of this Legislature and the desire of the people in the child care community to come together to really define our needs and to really come up with viable solutions that are going to be cost-effective on all levels.

But in order for the Social Service Block Grant agencies to remain functional, to not interrupt service to those 16,000-plus children who are served throughout the State in 225 centers, we need your help, because, quite frankly -- and this is a controversial statement; I recognize that -- the Department of Human Services, through its Division of Youth and Family Services -- the Department setting policy, the Division setting procedures -- has not kept pace with the developing needs of the Social Service Block Grant agencies. We are at the point where we need you as the checks and balance of our governmental arm to say, "Let's get on with the work of providing policies and procedures that will allow these people to exist."

Additionally, we need to have you-- Very specifically, we need to have you, one -- and here we go with

the money, the dollars, okay? -- continue the 4.2% increase that we were all granted back in January. That was the total out of a \$35 million budget that takes care of these 16,000-plus children 52 weeks a year, 10 hours a day. That 4.2% increase that was initiated in January came out to \$1,495,000.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: You're saying 4.2% of--

MS. BERRY: Of the \$35 million, bringing our total Social Service Block Grant funding now up to \$37 million, and change -- not big change at this point.

That helped. We now need more help, and this is all in the Department of Human Services' budget this year. You have to look hard for it, but it is there, and we don't want it cut as a line item when we begin having to make those very hard decisions. They have also -- the Division, accepted by the Department -- included a 5% increase to this \$37 million for the SSBG centers now, which would be an additional \$1,834,560. Now, these are not hard figures yet. I had to do this in the car coming down this morning because I didn't have my final figures. But I am in the ballpark with this, and can get those final figures. That is a final budget figure of \$38,929,000.

That will allow us to survive, coupled with a few other factors, but we are only talking here of a \$3.3 million increase from this January to next January. Not a lot, but if we don't have that, some of us are going to have to close. Some of us, such as me -- and this is where I work very closely with our Mayor Menendez -- say, "We are going to have to decrease service." Nobody, least of all a politician, wants to hear of a decrease in service. I don't want to do that as a provider. But I no longer want to have the workers in our center taking care of the working poor, and have them being the poorer population.

We had to decrease our donor share this year by \$52,000. Our Blue Cross/Blue Shield Major Medical increase,

just to maintain -- and we only provide single coverage, and many of our people need more than single coverage -- for this year alone is \$56,000. I am already in the red, and I haven't even started looking at how I am going to catch that up.

So, if we could keep those moneys, that would let us survive, and if we could develop legislation that would say, "Whenever the Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services" -- since we, in truth, are a quasi-governmental agency -- "gets an increase, a cost of living increase, we do, too. When they get frozen, we're frozen. When they get an increase, we get it"-- That would keep us current. That needs to be legislated action in order to protect us. If it is not legislatively initiated, we are at the mercy of the bureaucracy and, quite frankly, because child care is such a mixed bag on so many different levels, having us come together-- We are good people; we do stay open 10 hours a day, 52 weeks a year, and we don't turn people away. The comment is, "Well, you have managed in the past. You will continue to manage." What's happening is, we are beginning to get tired, and we are beginning not to be able to manage.

We do not want to see the dissipation of a system that is working at a time when a few dollars to shore us up now until the new Federal dollars come in can really help to save the system.

The other SSBG issue I want to raise is the sliding fee scale. You are going to hear about that, I am sure, from other of my colleagues, and you have already heard it from them. So I do not want to belabor it. But when I did some initial cost-- We are using the 1983 median income, which is, for a family of four, a little over \$29,000. At this point 75%; in 1989-1990 is up to 43. Politically, it is a hot potato, because if we increase the eligibility up to a more current rate, we are opening up our pool and, as a very astute legislator said to me, "That makes me feel as if I am giving



out a phony message, and I do not want to do that." And I said, "I understand that, but the reality is that there are these kinds of people who need to be served."

I take issue with some of my colleagues when it comes to this group of people and that group of people being served. All groups of people need to be served. Head Start takes care of the low, low income. They have a bureaucracy that takes very good care of them. Okay? The Social Service Block Grant funded agencies are the only agencies that receive subsidized child care. They do not get food stamps; they do not get a housing subsidy; they do not get Medicaid and Medicare for their particular needs. Those services are available to Head Start people. They are not to our next group, which is the working poor and the moderately low-income group, who need to have subsidized day-care so that they don't get back on the round-robin and go down into that lower category.

Families can afford to increase their fees. I never thought I would say that. Back in the '70s, I was brouhahaing and saying, "No, no, child care is a right of everybody, just as public education is." Then I got a little bit less naive, a little bit more grown up, and realized, "Well, I guess this is not, at this point, considered a national priority. We are going to have to pay for it as parents. Let's look and see how we can get some of those funds."

If we had increased the fees, whatever that cost of living increase was from '83 to now, that base line of \$20 would only be up to \$26. Not much, but for my agency that would bring in \$76,000 more a year because of the number of children we serve. That would allow me to pay my Blue Cross/Blue Shield and maybe even give more than a 3% increase to my staff.

What happens to those families when they come to us at six months, they go through Job Training Act training, they go through junior college, or some of them even finish up four

years of college, and then they graduate and they are no longer eligible to receive services? I shut my eyes. I'll probably get in trouble for that, but I am willing to go to bat on that one. We kind of grandfather them in and wait and say, "When your child is ready to graduate, then you're out." But until then, if I interrupt those services, that family has nowhere to go. So all of that striving and all of that work that they put forward to get them on that road toward economics, maintenance, and self-sufficiency, becomes lost. I do not want to be a party to that, and I am quite sure that you don't want that to happen either.

That is one of the reasons why we must look at developing a fairer and more equitable system for our fees. Again, a partnership. And do you know something? Our parents are willing to pay more. They do pay more.

And the third area I would like to have looked at, and I think that this again is just a policy issue-- I would like to have a revision done of the Division of Youth and Family Services contract that is written with the Social Service Block Grant agencies; to have it updated. That has not been done since the mid-'70s, when I helped to draft that, way, way back in my early days.

There have been clauses that have been turned around, but what that has done-- It has de-equalized the relationship so that, indeed, the Social Service Block Grant agencies are seen by the Division of Youth and Family Services and the Department of Human Services as quasi-governmental when it pleases them. When they don't want to listen or hear what we have to say, then we become private, nonprofit corporations. Very interesting! I wish I would be able to do that sometimes.

That finishes off what I would like to present today for the Social Service Block Grant agencies. I am now putting on another hat, and that is: As you all know, in the Department of Human Services we had the Office for Child

Care. That Office for Child Care has been moved from the Division into the Department. It has a good staff, but none of us in the community are quite sure what its mission is and what its purpose is. As I sit on the Commission of Employment and Training, our major task is to look at government as a total, look at the departments, consolidate, change, modify; not to lose services, but to make things more efficient. That is something that you certainly want to have happen. We are taking that charge very seriously within the Commission.

What I am going to present is almost a juxtaposition. I would like to have legislation so that this State can finally develop an Office for Children and Families that sits right next to the Governor; a new department, if you will. I don't want the Office for Children to be in the Department of Human Services. Human Services can take care of the abuse and neglect issues we have. The focus of the Office for Children would be to bring under its auspices the Social Service Block Grant agencies, the Head Start, our foster care. It would be an identifiable place for our citizenry to say, "These are our children; these are our families; this is where we get served." It would provide clearinghouse information; it would provide resource and referral; and it would provide a cohesive place for all of the profit, nonprofit, Head Start, SSBG, foster care, and employment centers to come together, to be able to develop a cohesive whole.

Many states have this. Because it serves children and families it is right up there. It is a department right next to the Governor. Other states have it. Massachusetts has this model, and it works very successfully.

When it comes to capital costs moneys, we need that. This has been brought up before. I reiterate that. I need to share with you that the Union City Day Care Center is involved in an expansion where we are using Community Block Grant funds to the tune of \$1.5 million to be able to build a new facility;

to expand into this model child and family and life skill center we are developing in Union City. I am very lucky. I have had the support of Mayor Menendez -- Assemblyman Menendez. That helps a lot. But I have also had a group of people who-- We have come together; we have looked at what needed to happen; and we have said, "Yes, we can afford to spend the money in this way." A good start!

The Governor's initiative, that he announced at Union City Day Care Center, \$5 million, has not been used. Five million dollars was appropriated last year, another \$5 million-- That pie is up to \$10 million now. There has been talk of having that not in the Department of Human Services, but over in the Department of Education, but it is going to serve the preschool population.

I am just about ready to stop. I would like to suggest that we use that money for capital costs. We look at that as a real viable place. The money has already been assigned, appropriated. Maybe that is a good place for us to start.

My last issue is: As we begin to look to use these new wonderful Federal dollars that come in, not to supplant, but to shore up and expand, I caution that if we go into public school sector education we make sure that the licensing qualities under which all of the other day-care and child care programs find themselves, under the Bureau of Licensing, are the same. Again, a very controversial issue. In my town of Upper Montclair, which offers a preschool program attached to the public school system-- That program is considered a model for the nation. I want you to know that that program would not be able to be accredited under the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation standards, because they do not have to fall under the licensing standards of this State, which are minimum standards.

In conclusion I need to say, children really are our lifeblood. They are our future. We know this. We have to have viable quality places for them to begin their lives. Research tells us this, shows us this. We know it. It is the first five years of life when a child comes together. I am talking about a child on the gross maturic level, on the language level, on the cognitive level, on the social level, and on the emotional level.

We now know that those areas of trust, the areas of being able to develop a sense of ethics, the areas of being able to develop a sense of what is right and what is not right, of good and wrong, are instilled in a child by age four -- age four. I suggest to you -- and I could startle you with the book I usually cart out -- that all of our sociopaths have been developed by the age of five. It is frightening, but there it is. Good preventative early childhood programs cannot undo what is going on in our families -- which needs help and is a whole other issue -- but they certainly can help to ameliorate some of those conditions and give a child other models and other alternatives. We must take responsibility for those young ones who are going to be sitting here someday, and there someday.

Thank you very much for your attention.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you. Any questions, Ann?  
(no response)

Betty Witherspoon, Executive Director, Better Beginnings, Hightstown, New Jersey.

B E T T Y W I T H E R S P O O N: Good morning. I am Betty Witherspoon. I am the Executive Director of the Better Beginnings Day Care Center located in Hightstown, New Jersey. Better Beginnings serves 75 children, preschoolers and before and after K, and 30 school-age children in the summertime. We are not even beginning to meet the needs of our population.

I have been at Better Beginnings now for more than 20 years, and I have no more business being here today than the man in the moon. But, I'm here. I am getting old, and I am getting tired, and there are no new young people coming into the field, unfortunately. I wonder if you know the reason why?

I came today because I am encouraged to know that you are interested in our problems, because for some time now I have given up hope on penetrating the pretense that we care about our children. We give lip service to it, and yet our actions are something else again, in this country and in this State. It gives me hope that perhaps one more drop of water, which my testimony here today is, will somehow make a difference and that somehow we will begin to act as if we really do love our children.

The major reason that I am here today, though, is on behalf of my staff. I have some other things that I would like to bring to your attention, or perhaps reenforce. The need for space is one of them. We would be able, if we could get some of the new Federal money coming in, to serve some of the dire needs in our communities. I am not from the inner city, as my long-time colleague, Dana, is, but it might as well be the inner city, because the problems that are developing in a beautiful suburb are quite similar.

Better Beginnings has been recognized, too, consistently as an innovative and excellent program. The people who are making that possible are the staff, who are providing the major subsidy for the program through the salaries they do not make. Many of them have to take second jobs in order to make an adequate living, and they do that. They work a second job so they will be able to do the work they love. This is a very sad commentary. Even at that, we would not be able to have a full staff were it not that we have fully accredited persons coming from other countries with five-year degrees, where it is still an honor to be "la professor."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Betty, may I ask you a question?

MS. WITHERSPOON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: What do you pay your staff?

MS. WITHERSPOON: Staff salaries -- which I was certainly going to bring up -- for people fully degreed in early childhood-- They could go into the public school system, where I believe the starting salary now is \$22,000 a year. This is still low, but it is for a 10-month year, with a shorter day than my people work for \$14,000. It is a sad commentary; a very sad commentary. Ours, too, is a SSBG center.

Unfortunately, our State has not kept up with its commitment to its children. Every time I hear about Even Start and Good Start and Federal money coming down, my experience has taught me to say, "Oh, no, not another underfunded program." That has been my experience through all of these years.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Do you think it is worse to give a little bit of money and spread it around, rather than concentrate it into effective programs?

MS. WITHERSPOON: Absolutely. I absolutely do. I think when we give a charge to people to provide quality care for our children, we can't give them that charge without giving them adequate funding in order to do it. To spread it around is really ineffective and just causes a lot of harm.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: So sometimes the decisions that will have to be made with some of this money are going to be painful decisions, because there are some people we are going to have to say no to.

MS. WITHERSPOON: Exactly so. I know I am speaking to people who are very compassionate about our cause, and I really appreciate that a lot. It means a lot, and gives me a little hope myself at a point where I am really wringing my hands.

We are really looking at the fact that those of us who are in this field are very deeply committed to providing the highest quality service possible to our children and to our



families. We would rather close than modify that in any way at all. We are there because we care very much about people. If we had to lower our standards, we would rather not do it at all. That is what I am saying to you: Either keep the standards high, or don't do it at all.

We are faced with so many problems right now, and they seem to be getting worse. We are teaching our children to live at peace with each other. We, too, are a bilingual, actually a trilingual, and a multicultural center. It has become that way. Forty percent of our children now speak another language as their first language, with English as their second language.

We have the same problems as stated before. We have children who are coming to us with AIDS. We have crack babies. We have children with fetal alcohol syndrome. We have drug infestations.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: And this is Hightstown where you are located?

MS. WITHERSPOON: Hightstown/East Windsor. This is a suburban area. Being in the field that we are, we also become very-- We are not just providing child care. We are providing a service to parents and to the community as well. We become very involved with all of the problems in the community. People ask me how I happened to get so deeply involved in substance abuse prevention and education. It was natural to me when I had a child who was coming to school everyday grubby, in the same clothes, never washed, very tired, very exhausted, ill fed. I tried to find out what was happening with this child. I called DYFS in, and I discovered that, indeed, drug dealing was going on in the home and the child's rest was constantly being interrupted with the uproar that was going on. There was very little attention being given to this child, but DYFS didn't have any right to go in and intervene for the child because it was a police problem really. The police were never able to-- Subsequently, after a long time, I think they were able to do something, but for a long period of time--

That was when I first realized that I couldn't ignore anything, because all that is happening in that big world out there is going to be brought in to us in some form or another. That was the day that I first got involved in substance abuse prevention, and we have come a long distance since then. As I said, all of the other things that are going on out there -- the lack of housing, everything else -- is brought to us. We have the commitment to care for the children and do the best we can for them.

When we get a 4.2% increase after two years of being frozen-- We are grateful to get it, but it doesn't even begin to pay my additional costs of paying rent, paying liability insurance, and so forth. It just doesn't, much less being able to have anything left over for staff, and staffing is the most important thing of all.

Do you know what it does to a small child to have a staff that is not stable, even though it is a staff that wants to stay with them? The staff leave in tears, but they have to leave because they can make more money in a factory than they can make in a day-care center. These are people with degrees, and that is a shame. They leave in tears because they are leaving what they really love to do, and have the talent to do. It is a sad situation.

The children do not understand. They feel, on top of every other problem they have, another sense of rejection. Young children need stability, and they don't understand all of those things that are going on out there that affect an adult's life. All they know is, you are here with me, or you are not here with me.

One of the other things I wanted to bring to you is the fact that we've really, really got to have some money to build with if we are going to expand services, because the space isn't out there. It just isn't out there. We have to have space if we are going to expand services.

One of the charges I give to you is-- I ask you to give your attention to all of those other problems out there that are plaguing our children, not the least of which is that we try to teach them to be peaceful, when they are watching a war every night on TV. There is nowhere we would rather spend our money than on services for them. It's really tough. I am just asking you to take all of these things into consideration. But, more than anything else, I love my staff deeply, and they love my children deeply. I am here on their behalf today. I beg you to do everything you can to improve what we have. We have some very, very good programs out there already existing. They have been ignored for too long. We should be putting money into using them as models as we continue to build, not slapping some other thing over here, new rules over there, new this, that, and the other. Let's take what we have and make it be the very best it can be, and build from there.

I really thank you for giving me a moment of hope today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you.

MS. WITHERSPOON: It is very appropriate that this hearing is on Valentine's Day, because for a long time we have been wearing the red heart as our symbol.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: I would just like to comment, Madam Chairman. I have said this again and again, and it aggravates me every time. There is some type of a mind-set, I believe, at every level of government that thinks that those who give care -- caregivers-- You have to do it out of love. You are certainly not doing it for the pay.

MS. WITHERSPOON: That's true.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: But I think the mind-set is that they don't have to give you a living wage, because--

MS. WITHERSPOON: It is our duty in life. (laughter)  
But, duty doesn't pay the rent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Or buy a loaf of bread. You're absolutely right.

MS. WITHERSPOON: Thank you. I could kiss you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Go right ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: It's Valentine's Day, we accept kisses.

Chuck Lane, from Pine Beach. Mr. Lane?

C H U C K L A N E: Good afternoon, or good morning, whichever it might be at this point.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: It's still morning.

MR. LANE: I wear a couple of hats today. I was asked to be here on behalf of the Toms River Chamber of Commerce, which has a committee studying this particular problem, as we speak almost. A few meetings have taken place based on economic development and the basic needs within our communities. That committee is in the midst of its work, and expects to have a report developed by the 20th of this month. I will see to it that when that takes place, you will be sent a copy of it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you.

MR. LANE: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. That committee and the work they are doing is looking for solutions the same as your organization is, and I hope we can work together to find some.

I also deal in the construction industry and I have built some nursery schools. It is unique. I have listened to the ladies testify and understand the unique problems involved. I would like you to know that I see a significant amount of coordination between the DYFS organization and the DCA, the organization that regulates the types of buildings these facilities can be placed in, and so forth. I would encourage that that coordination continue because it could really get to be a boondoggle should they not coordinate the regulations. It could create delays in the opening of

facilities in the future, and make it impossible for people to open facilities that have already been planned and started. So, that is happening fairly well at this time, and I encourage that to continue.

The next item regarding the opening of facilities and the availability of facilities is, I encourage that the zoning restrictions be looked at carefully. On a personal note, it took me six years in a community that clearly allowed nursery school facilities in the residential district, to the point where I had to go to the Appellate Division in Trenton. Because of political pressure, the local zoning body would not approve that facility -- six years.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: What town was this?

MR. LANE: Berkeley Township. Six years and in front of the Appellate Division. Even after the Appellate Division ruled that it was a permissible use, other political roadblocks were put up that made it take another year-and-a-half.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Working in the construction business myself, I know what you mean. If someone wants to deny you a building permit, they can certainly find a zillion ways to do it.

MR. LANE: There are many ways to put the roadblocks up. It is unfortunate, but true, that it does happen. The unique thing about it is, the neighbors who applied the political pressure in the neighborhood now say, "Gee, it's not so bad after all." Isn't that amazing?

Site planning is my next comment. I have found in many cases in building nursery schools that there needs to be this -- and it kind of flows together-- If you can put these facilities in a residential neighborhood the land costs less than it does in a commercial neighborhood, so you can use a little more of it. You need to be careful about the stacking of automobiles during drop-off and pickup times. You need to dedicate enough land to these facilities so that those cars

have a smooth flow of traffic for the safety of the children; so that they can back up in a row with the assistance of the staff to get the children in and out of the school. Those two things will solve one another if we continue to address the issue of zoning within residential neighborhoods.

My third item here deals with a few personal opinions, not the opinions necessarily of the Chamber of Commerce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Your disclaimer is duly noted.

MR. LANE: Thank you. I believe that day-care centers and the service they provide are absolutely essential. I think from what I have learned that better people come from nursery schools. I believe the government of our State should continue to regulate those institutions. Perhaps institutions is a bad word. I don't think they should be institutions. I think they should remain private industry, but be regulated thoroughly by the State.

If you start out from that premise, that nursery schools are now -- or day-care centers -- and continue to be private industry, and then you say, "Well, what portion of the public needs the assistance of the government to be able to afford that service?" and directly put all of your money into one bucket, decide who is eligible for that assistance, and assist, through those people who are in need -- fund it enough so that the services can be paid for in an amount sufficient to fund the capital to build the buildings, to fund the staff which will be able to earn a living working in those facilities -- in other words, keep it simple -- it will probably work better and cost less for the government to administrate.

I admire all those people who are working at substandard wages to provide for our children. It is amazing. They are dedicated. That is all I have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you, Mr. Lane.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Thank you very much.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Is Kathy Palamara still here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Kathy was waiting, but she had to leave.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: I was trying to get her in, but-- Jerome Margolis, Early Advantage Child Care Centers, Inc.?

J E R O M E M A R G O L I S: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Good morning.

MR. MARGOLIS: As a former professor of education, member of the Board of Directors of the National Child Care Association, founding President of the New Jersey Child Care Association, member of the Governing Board of the New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children, and, most importantly, an owner/operator of a comprehensive full-day preschool child care facility, I would like to thank the General Assembly Task Force on Child Care for giving me this opportunity to identify areas where both the legislative and executive branches of State government can best focus their attention.

Let me get to the heart of these issues on this Valentine's Day. Most of us in this room believe, as I do, that high quality preschool child care should be available, affordable, and accessible to parents of young children in the State of New Jersey. However, let me dispel the myth concerning a preschool child care crisis. None exists. There is availability, affordability, and accessibility of preschool programming, for the most part, throughout the State of New Jersey. However, there are genuine pockets of need that should be addressed by government. To be specific, government needs to:

A) Encourage expanded services to infants and toddlers -- birth through two years of age.

B) Encourage expanded services to low-income families, especially in the urban inner city and rural areas.



C) Strengthen standards of service delivery by returning to the former and truly appropriate preschool teaching certification of N-3.

D) Ensure the health and safety of all preschool children served by family day-care homes through the mandatory licensing and inspection of these child care environments.

E) Support Nick Scalera, Pat Byrne, and the entire DYFS Licensing Bureau through adequate State funding sources so that they can: 1) enforce the quality standards which already exist in our State, and 2) reduce the onerous licensing fees -- up to an increase of 853% -- as currently proposed by the Division.

In this time of extremely tight budgets, and notwithstanding the infusion of Federal preschool child care dollars, it appears to me that we must look toward the current preschool child care delivery system to determine the most cost-effective way to achieve our goals. There are three elements which when woven together comprise our delivery system today. If we encourage only the first element, fully funded government programs, our resources will be quickly depleted and the breadth and depth of the services will be severely limited. If we encourage only the second element, programs provided by nonprofit organizations, we are faced with significant capital outlays and perhaps a slightly better return on the investment dollar with regard to expansion of services, but no real taxable revenue base for our State government. However, if we encourage the third and certainly the largest element in this fabric of service delivery, the proprietary sector, we can maximize the use of our same State dollars and potentially have a significant increase in available services, while also expanding the revenues available to the State in real terms through the taxes paid by these legitimate business enterprises.

How might the Legislature best expend the available preschool child care dollars? Let me share the following ideas:

A) Expand your investment into the Head Start and existing Title XX Social Service Block Grant programs. Parents with low and/or very limited incomes need expanded opportunities for child care services.

B) Be creative. Encourage licensed family day-care opportunities in urban inner city and rural areas through small outright grants and small low-cost loans. This will not only expand child care services and establish a small taxable preschool child care business, but may also create the opportunity for taxable employment for some of those families that will ultimately utilize this service.

C) Develop a fund for larger scale low-cost revolving business loans for established, financially secure, proprietary center-based programs which are interested in opening new centers or expanding existing centers.

D) Provide tax incentives -- either real estate and/or corporate -- for a limited duration, to those proprietary center-based programs which develop new corporate child care facilities.

E) Provide an incentive to all center-based programs which meet some minimum percentage requirement with regard to the number of infants and toddlers served by their program.

F) Finally, fully fund the Licensing Division of DYFS. They are excellent at what they do and, quite frankly, all child care centers cannot easily afford their proposed increases in licensing fees.

If I may just have one additional minute of your time, I would like to address a highly related issue in the field of preschool child care education; that is, the critical need for appropriate funding; if you will, an entitlement for preschool infants and toddlers with special needs -- ages birth through two.

Currently, there are severe limitations upon the establishment of new programs for these children, with at least a bias against, if not an outright prohibition against, the proprietary sector. This is not only unnecessary and discriminatory, but a true waste of professional resources and talents. In the marketplace of ideas and services, parents should have the option or choice of programming for their special needs preschool child and also have the financial support of our State to ensure that appropriate early intervention services will be made available.

I would humbly suggest that this undermet need be reviewed within the context of your discussions, and that a substantial dollar commitment be allocated from the available preschool budget to address this issue. This is of critical importance to both these families and their young special needs children.

In conclusion, if I can be of any further assistance to the Task Force, or any of its constituent members, please do not hesitate to call on me. Again, thank you for this opportunity to share my views.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you.

MR. MARGOLIS: Any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: No questions. Thank you.

Barbara Gordon, Ocean County Child Care Coordinator.

B A R B A R A G O R D O N: Good morning. I am the Child Care Coordinator for Ocean County. I am employed by the Children's Home Society of New Jersey, which is the private, not-for-profit child and family welfare agency. We came to Ocean County almost three years ago to coordinate child care for the participants in the REACH welfare reform program.

I am just going to tell you a little bit about what our office does so you will know my background, and so on. We handle, as I said, all the child care for the welfare recipients who are participating in the welfare reform

program. We are also the local resource and referral agency for Ocean County, and we have the job of being the sponsoring organization for family day-care in the county.

Unfortunately, our office is small and we have our hands full just keeping the voluminous numbers of statistics we have to keep to fulfill our contracts. Some of what I am going to tell you today is not documented, but I can tell you that I am in the office at least four out of five days a week. I talk with parents, I counsel parents, I listen to them on the telephone, I listen to my counselors doing the same thing, and what I am going to tell you does exist in Ocean County, although I cannot give you exact numbers to go with what I am going to tell you.

It is documented that our agency in 1990 made over 1500 child care referrals to REACH participants. Undocumented, however, is the number of parents who said to us, "I can't help but worry about what is going to happen to me after I am finished with the program." We made 600 child care referrals to community parents. That is documented. Undocumented, however, is the number of parents who, after interviewing their choice of caregivers, could not afford to pay them.

Or, another undocumented figure that I desperately want, to devise some kind of a mechanism to keep in the future, is the number of parents who want Social Service Block Grant slots. We do not have that number, nor do we have the number who specify their choice of care with center base. Child care is a parental choice. Our agency tries to educate the parents to make an informed decision, but in the end those parents have the right to select the child care that best meets their needs.

A parent calls, her child is under two-and-a-half, she wants a center base, but there is no center slot available because the child is not toilet trained and is under two-and-a-half years old. As of yesterday, February 13, 1991, in Ocean County, there were six Social Service Block Grant

slots in center-based care for children under two-and-a-half to serve working parents working normal working hours. I spoke to the director, who told me there were 20 parents on that waiting list for those six slots.

Parents with children over two-and-a-half did not fare much better yesterday in Ocean County in their search for a center-based SSBG slot. In Brick Town, there is a center which serves Toms River, Lakewood, the Brick area. The director stated yesterday that there are 42 parents on the waiting list for those slots.

Yesterday in Ocean County there were no subsidized family day-care slots which perhaps could have taken up the slack in infant care in the county, had the parents had the money to pay for those slots.

Parents with children in special needs do not fare well at all in Ocean County. They encounter great difficulty. I spoke to a parent yesterday whose child is six years old and is in the Alpha School in Lakewood. The Alpha School has vacation next week. She cannot participate in the Welfare Reform Program because our agency cannot find child care for her. All she wanted from our agency was somebody to care for her child next week, two mornings, so she could attend one class at Ocean County College. I couldn't help her.

Parents were desperate in 1990. Given the economy of 1991, I doubt they will be less so. I fear a rise in the already large number of children left at home alone, and an increase of very young children being responsible for even younger brothers and sisters. To quote from a latchkey child, "I used to be kind of scared at first, but now I am just lonely." Children who stay at home even for short periods of time are at risk. A study at the American Academy of Pediatrics, September 1989, found that children who are by themselves for only one hour per school day are at greater risk for substance abuse, regardless of their sex, race, family

income, academic performance, involvement in sports, or other extracurricular activities. Children who spend five to ten hours per week in self care are 1.6 times more likely to smoke cigarettes, 1.7 times more likely to drink alcohol, and so on.

Is there self care in Ocean County? You bet there is, and we receive phone calls from people telling us that a neighbor has a four-year-old alone at home so the parent can work at the local 7-Eleven store to make ends meet.

Another form of care in the county that is of concern to me is, we get calls every week from people telling us, "There is this lady down the street and she is watching, I know, 10 or 12 infants and toddlers." That is really very scary to me. And yet, our agency isn't in the business of shutting people down. Of course, we would encourage her to become registered and help her out in any way we could. But people are reticent to tell us who it is. Their reason: "If I tell you who it is you'll shut her down. She only charges a dollar an hour, and that is all the parent can afford." So we're settling for something that is better than nothing.

I would like to quote Helen Blank (phonetic spelling), Director of Child Care for the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund: "We just don't care much for our children." I submit to you -- as the previous speakers have said -- we don't care much for caregivers either. Ms. Blank states: "People who care for children are paid more than only one group, and that group is the clergy." Child care staff earn less than half as much as equally educated women and less than a third as much as equally educated men. Staff turnover -- which was addressed before -- in centers has tripled during the last decade. Common sense and all child development research says that young children need consistent, stable people with whom they can develop relationships, and we all know that reaching kids early is the best way. I know personally several center owners, and they are not wealthy people.

More statistics: The Department of Labor reports that in four years, three-quarters of mothers with school-age children will be working, and two-thirds of the mothers of preschoolers will be working, but will they earn enough to cover the costs of child care? I have a DYFS fee survey that was done by the State of New Jersey Department of Human Services in the central region of New Jersey. The average fee for infants for full-time care was \$114.57; for toddlers, \$104.63; and for preschoolers, \$87.98. That is in a center. It breaks down to \$3.37, \$3.34, and \$2.95 an hour. You can't really do that when you are only making \$4.25.

Center-based care in the central region of Ocean County, the average was: infants, \$99.07; preschoolers, \$92.00; toddlers, \$97.66; and school-age, \$70.20. So you can see that family day-care is not too far different than the cost of center-based care. I am not going to bother breaking that down by the hour.

These quotes are from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the National Association for Family Day Care, the New Jersey Department of Labor, and the Department of Congress. There are 708,000 working women in New Jersey; 529,000 children under five years old; 54,000 preschoolers in centers; 73,000 in home -- this is 1985 -- and there were 87,000 preschoolers in family day-care. In New Jersey, there are 2528 registered family day-care homes serving approximately 10,000 children. This is clearly a preference of many parents. It is highly recommended by early childhood specialists, particularly for infants and toddlers who thrive in a home atmosphere. And yet in Ocean County, one of our family day-care homes in Toms River has been closed down, and one of our family day-care homes in Manchester-- The people who run it are having to apply for a variance to do legally, voluntarily, what their neighbor down the street is doing--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: On the sly?



MS. GORDON: --on the sly. So I clearly hope that the bill goes through.

What we can do -- as the gentleman who spoke before me said-- We need subsidized infant slots under two-and-a-half in Ocean County very badly. I am going to tell you that there are preschool slots in the county. I had a director call, saying: "I need children." That is not the problem here, except for the under two-and-a-halves, where there are not slots. The problem is affordability.

I also wonder whether some of the money -- and I don't know; this is something that is new to me -- that is coming in might be used for a voucher system for family day-care providers. Why can't parents have money to pay for the care of their choice? I don't know whether that could possibly be an option or not.

I would like, in closing, to quote from Dr. Edward Ziegler, who helped to form Head Start, one of the most wonderful programs in the world, I think. We have to realize that children are worth saving, or we are going to lose an entire nation. And we are all going to have to band together -- I think this is crucial -- schools, communities, social service agencies, churches, government, business, and corporations. There are solutions out there, but we have yet to come to the conclusion that the children are really worth saving.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you, Barbara.

MS. GORDON: Are there any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Your comments about -- again, what we keep hearing -- how it is difficult to attract people into these businesses, reminds me of the fact that at every-- I deal with a lot of groups which deal with children, whether it is people who deal with shelters for runaways and homeless children, or whatever, and they tell me the same thing. Their

workers are paid at the lowest end of the spectrum, and eventually they have to leave because they just can't do it anymore -- people who are involved in substance abuse programs, people involved in early childhood care, and so forth.

I think we have made somewhat of a commitment in terms of our educators at least by establishing minimum salaries, as controversial as that was, but that is one segment of people which deals with a child during the course of a day. Oftentimes, as some speakers indicated earlier, the problems with a child and the direction a child is going to go in, are formed in the first five years of his or her life.

I appreciate your coming here today and your patience in waiting.

MS. GORDON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Ann, any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: No. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Lynn Lane, Hilltop Nursery School. Is Lynn still here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: She had to leave also.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Okay. Pat Petracco, New Jersey School Boards Association?

P A T R I C I A P E T R A C C O: Good afternoon. I am Pat Petracco, a staff member of the New Jersey School Boards Association. I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with you today the concerns and some policy positions of the New Jersey School Boards Association's membership regarding our view of the critical need for a statewide comprehensive system for the delivery of high quality child care services that include public, private, and employer-sponsored programs, in the home, in community-based centers, and school-based programs.

Educators and local school board members in the 611 school districts that we represent witness close up the growing need for additional child care resources for working parents

and parenting teenagers struggling to complete their high school education. They witness, too, the negative effects on children who are not adequately cared for or who, while still children themselves, drop out of school to care for their own babies when no alternative care is available.

The New Jersey School Boards Association views quality child care as an essential component for the healthy development of every child. We know that the quality of care that a child receives in his/her earliest years plays an important part in school readiness; and that for school-age children those hours before and after school can have a major impact on the success -- of lack thereof -- in the classroom each day. Unfortunately, too many parents in today's society are being forced to make compromises about the care of their children because the extended family structure has all but disappeared and out-of-home child care resources have not kept pace with the escalating need.

Our organization believes that the public schools can, and must, play an important role in the development of an integrated and coordinated system of child care in this State. We envision a system that fosters interagency collaboration and coordination of resources and programs.

Our membership wants more State and Federal funding made available to enable school districts to develop school-based preschool and child care programs and to promote linkages among Head Start, other community-based preschool and child care centers, and family day-care homes, with the public school programs.

In particular, we believe the State should provide incentives for the development of child care services for high-need populations such as infants of adolescent parents and children with disabilities, and for good quality before and after school programs that maximize community resources to provide recreation, enrichment, and social development for school-age children who need supervision.

It is our belief also that the State Board of Education should be involved in the issues related to child care to a greater degree than in the past, by providing technical assistance, staff training, and research-based program models, and also by coordinating the early childhood education efforts of the Department of Education with those of the Department of Human Services.

Lastly, but of important significance, is our concern that an early childhood education teaching certificate must be developed that requires specialized training for teachers of very young children. This would be a certificate for nursery through grade three.

In closing, I would like to echo the concerns of some of the previous speakers, specifically about the need for capital improvements to facilities. I think last year's attempt at putting together the Urban Pre-K Program was one example of that. It is a wonderful program that links the schools with community resources, Head Start programs, and community-based centers. But in trying to go into the inner cities where the programs are most desperately needed, they found that the facilities were simply not available, so many of these school districts could not, in fact, apply for the program.

That concludes my remarks this morning. I do appreciate having this opportunity to include the School Boards Association's positions in your deliberations. If you have any questions, I would be happy to respond.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Okay, thank you. Ann?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Thank you very much.

MS. PETRACCO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Mr. Harris, I know you testified before. Is there anything you would like to add? (affirmative response from audience) Okay, please come forward. We love hearing from you. David Harris, Chairperson, Child Care

Advisory Council. This is the Council that everyone has been praising, extolling all of their work all morning long.

D A V I D J. H A R R I S, JR.: Thank you very much, Assemblywoman. I had an opportunity to examine the transcript, and I would certainly like to compliment the firm that is doing the transcribing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: It's called the State of New Jersey.

MR. HARRIS: Oh, the State of New Jersey. That is where our tax money is well spent.

As you said, I am the Chair of the New Jersey Child Care Advisory Council. I am also the founder of the Greater New Brunswick Day Care Council, a child development program for children from six weeks of age to 12 years, including school-age child care, for 140 children, 12 hours a day, year-round. I also teach on the graduate level part-time in the Early Childhood Department of Kean College. I am a national consultant on child care policy, and I am the Chair of the Child Care Policy Group, also of New Jersey.

My prior remarks I will not repeat. I will simply focus on what appears to be an erroneous assumption that a great windfall of money is coming into New Jersey that will help us go off in a thousand new directions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: I think we understand that all things are relative in this year when very little funding is coming from anyplace for anything. This is sort of a very small silver lining to an otherwise dim picture.

MR. HARRIS: Well, I think we should also be aware of the fact that the Federal money has not been appropriated. Obviously, there will be approximately \$750 million available this year to the states. In terms of New Jersey's share of the Block Grant, it will amount to somewhere between \$13 million and \$16 million. But let's just take a look at what that kind of money means in terms of the present system.

We are presently -- just for 225 Social Services Block Grant centers -- investing approximately \$32 million of State and Federal moneys into 225 centers that are serving 12,500 children. Within that system, \$7 million is produced just through fees. So, if we just take a look at the expenditure of, let's say, approximately \$40 million with the fees, we are serving 12,500 children. There are approximately 2100 licensed child care centers in the State of New Jersey serving 125,000 children. If we just take a look at that and call it the infrastructure without talking about the thousands of family day-care centers -- family day-care homes that are registered, and just address the infrastructure issues, we will have very little money to go anywhere just in terms of shoring up the existing system. I think it is very important for us to address the strengthening of the existing system as we put together a long-term plan.

One of the hazards in this business is that we have to deal with policymakers who have to face the public and be reelected, and one of the ways to be reelected is to have, you know, a whole array of nice sounding programs out there. Sometimes after we take a close look at what is being proposed at the point of service delivery, there are some serious questions as to the impact.

I am very distressed about the assumption, appearing to be an A priority assumption, that the needs of the poor are being addressed. If the previous speaker was correct, and said that about 18% of the Head Start eligible children are being served-- I would not reasonably argue that the poor are being served, if fewer than 20% of the children are in quality programs. I would not be prepared to argue that we should make a quantum leap in terms of subsidized care, you know, across the broad spectrum, that is some kind of a scattergun approach, just to say that we are serving the needs. There are some ways to begin to address those needs.

So, I have very strong concerns that the Federal government around this money must make rules. The rule-making process has not been completed. While we may go up to the 75th percentile in terms of the State median income in New Jersey, which we are the second or third -- all according to how you calculate it -- in terms of the highest income per capita in the Union--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Something like \$40,000 is the figure.

MR. HARRIS: For a family of four.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: For a family of four.

MR. HARRIS: Well, if you just look at that -- and we came up with something in that general area, Assemblywoman, Madam Chair-- If we move the subsidized care up to the 75th percentile, you might be talking about a registered nurse who has three children being available for a subsidy, and certainly no one would quarrel with that in terms of providing a subsidy to a family like that. But we have to think creatively in terms of the existing system so that we are not simply imposing greater demand on a system that is inflexible now in terms of its ability to take more children.

So how can we put the poor and the higher income groups on a level playing field? I think there are some ways that with a blended rate so that the centers that are serving all poor in certain areas can receive an additional allocation, and the centers that are in the suburban areas-- Those parents could pay based on income also, so that no one would suffer. So if you are serving all poor children, your income will be roughly the same as the cost per child.

We are at a point where comprehensive planning is required. We require of this administration, the leaders in the Legislature, to pull together, not just hearings, but a planning body that will do more than simply have one public hearing as required under the legislation. We need an open

planning process so that we can comment, fight it out, lock the doors and put everyone in there, and then let the policymakers in the Governor's Office go back with that and come up with what they think is best and, you know, share it with the various groups, certainly with the Legislature first.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Excuse me?

MR. HARRIS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: When you say the legislation requires one public hearing, what body are you talking about currently?

MR. HARRIS: Okay. The Governor is really the person who has to put together an advisory group under the Child Care Development Block Grant. All that is required under the legislation is one public hearing. It would be a tragedy if we simply abided by the letter of the law, instead of the spirit of same. We have an opportunity in New Jersey to take this initiative that we are provided by the appearance of a windfall to organize on the State level a comprehensive plan, so that we know where to put new money as it comes down, rather than be guided by the funding stream. If we clearly set out our priorities, we will know what to do with any new money. What is absent right now is, a plan does not exist in a comprehensive sense. I encourage the leadership here to begin to address that issue.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Well, it might be that one of our recommendations is that type of a body be formed. I don't know.

MR. HARRIS: I would hope so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: It is certainly within the scope of what our recommendations should be.

MR. HARRIS: And it is within the requirements of the legislation, that there must be comprehensive planning set forth in the various states.

Now, there were some other myths that were kind of offered by many of the hard-working people in our field. Some



argue that fingerprinting will provide a sense of security for the parents. All the national studies show that that is an erroneous assumption. Only between 2% and 3% of all pedophiles have any kind of record, so once we do that and we allow people to believe they are safe because everybody has been fingerprinted and run through the Federal situation, we are still left with the notion -- with the clear fact that less than 1% of that kind of abuse takes place in schools, child care centers, or any organized institution; that those crimes are crimes of the neighborhood. They are people who have developed friendships with the parents and used those friendships to gain access to the children. That is very, very clear. Before we spend another dime on those kinds of programs, simply fingerprinting people and offering that false hope, we need to be clear on what the studies are showing us around the country.

The other point I would like to make is, in terms of the paucity of care -- of resources for infants and toddlers, it is an issue of building requirements. You must have an institutional to use group, which is a fire suppression system in a masonry structure, essentially. But that is money. So if we can make a very, very appropriate use of existing funds, or new funds, by simply guaranteeing that the infrastructure that is in force and in effect now be upgraded, so that they can begin to receive the children and care for the children that parents are requiring them to care for right now-- Very few parents are sitting home waiting for their kids to be so-called "toilet trained," before they go back to work. That is why you have this emerging situation in neighborhoods where people are caring for children underground.

It is interesting. We support parent choice, we almost bow before that, but those are parents who take their children to those places where there are 25 kids in one house. That is a parent choice. So we cannot worship at the feet of

that god unless we add some additional questions: Why would a parent put their children at risk like that? A simple answer is, the lack of available resources.

The other thing New Jersey must do as we face the new legislation is, the Feds have to decide -- and this is a crucial political issue -- as to the issue of supplantation versus supplementing. They have to decide which year they shall fix the State expenditures. New Jersey is somewhere around \$20 million to \$25 million for child care. In order to buy into this new situation, they must continue to spend at that level and not use the Federal funny -- money -- funny might be pretty good -- the Federal money to supplant that expenditure.

So if they fix the year at the year that the Federal legislation was passed, New Jersey will have to continue to spend at approximately \$25 million, and then anything else will have to go on top of that. But they can reasonably argue and fix it at some other year, which would make our expenditure less.

So there are a lot of things that are going on right now that are, I think, very important in terms of the ongoing debate. I would encourage you to simply stand back from the situation and not rush to judgment, because the legislation allows us to roll the money forward. We will, as Ceil Zalkind said, receive money on September 7, and in the new fiscal year which begins 1 October, we will get another dose. This money can be rolled forward in each area, and the 4A money is really an entitlement, so we can draw down that money just based on our matching funds.

So, it behooves us to use this time to do comprehensive planning and to begin to put New Jersey forward. We can take this opportunity, Madam Chair, to look at the licensing regulations. If we are concerned about the day-care trilemma that Gwen Morgan discusses, which is quality,

availability, and affordability, we can take that and look at the regulations for center-based care and for the family day-care, which is a voluntary system.

But I will give you this one example in closing, Madam Chair: We have a situation where New Jersey allows a maximum of 20 children, in terms of group size, across-the-board. That means 20 infants and toddlers can be in one group, all the way through the six-year, or five- to six-year kindergarten group. Now, in terms of what it is like to have 20 infants, you know, in one room, it is a function of the number of square feet also, which in New Jersey is 35 square feet per child. But let's take a look at questions like that where we are allowed, under our regulations, to have one toilet and one lavatory for 30 children, provided they are under 30 months of age. The location of that lav and that toilet can be either one floor up or one floor down from the play area.

Now, why don't you take a look at what it looks like to take 20 two-year-olds to the bathroom, one floor up or one floor down. The American Academy of Pediatrics tells us that the best way to control the spread of infection in child care, is hand washing. Well, if the one lav is upstairs or downstairs, how much hand washing will we do? And the serious question in terms of quality just on the health level-- How much hand washing will the child care provider be able to access?

The dirtiest places in child care centers are the hands of the workers and the hands of the children. We must have a system that at least on a minimum level allows people to get their hands washed after buttoning up coats and cleaning noses and, for God's sake, changing diapers; coming in contact with fecal matter.

So, we have a lot to do, Madam Chair, in terms of the infrastructure and the message that New Jersey is sending to the parents and children. I have only selected one or two

examples. Obviously, you have full access to center requirements, to family day-care registration, and to the national legislation.

I urge you to urge the Governor to step forward to have an open planning process where the advocates of all kinds of child care can come together and put together a reasonable comprehensive plan for the present and the out years. Without that, we will never know what to do with any resources that come down.

Again I thank you for your patience, for coming up to New Brunswick -- and I hope we treated you well when you were there -- and for the opportunity to travel on the Parkway this morning coming here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Well, this is my area, so I welcome you to Lakewood, and my alma mater, by the way here.

MR. HARRIS: I could tell. One of my great English teachers -- as a matter of fact, the first teacher I had a crush on was a graduate of this school.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Happens to many men with Georgian Court women. (laughter)

MR. HARRIS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Mr. Richard Smith. I know you testified at our first hearing. Is there anything you would like to add?

R I C H A R D G. S M I T H, JR.: I will only make a couple of comments.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Okay. Why don't you come forward and speak into the microphone so we can record your comments?

MR. SMITH: I testified on December 4. Beginning on page 76 is my testimony, and it is pretty self-explanatory. But I just want to reemphasize the fact that Senate Bill No. 1117 that became law a year ago January, should be amended, or expanded in a manner that makes it clear to the would-be provider and municipal governments who can build a child care

center, where it can be built, and under what circumstances it should be built. There must be statutory zoning legislation relative to child care in the State of New Jersey.

I would like to make one comment relative to infant care. My wife and I had -- or, my wife in particular-- We had applied to establish a child care center. My wife, who is a registered nurse and who has had experience in hospital nursery care and labor and delivery, was interested in establishing an infant care as one part of the child care facility. But we didn't even get out of the court system. I'll leave it at that. My testimony basically speaks for itself.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you for coming again.

Carol Besler, President, New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children. Carol, are you still here? (affirmative response from audience) I think you also testified previously, but if there is anything you would like to add--

C A R O L A N N B E S L E R: I will not reiterate the same comments.

The New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children is a large group of professionals whose interest and concern is with all children ages zero to eight years and the arenas in which they are being served. We are the leader in a national system of accreditation for preschools. Our accreditation standards have served as a basis and a model for many corporations involved in child care such as the Johnson and Johnson Grant Program and the Cigna Insurance Safety Group Program.

NJAEYC's chief concern for New Jersey is the accessibility of quality programs for children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. As we are all aware, parents in the higher economic brackets can well afford to seek out and purchase quality child care at any price, and there are

programs in place that have done an excellent job in providing high quality care as well as resources to the families of those children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Programs such as Head Start and the SSBG programs have been in place and working beautifully, but that is not to say that there is not room for expansion of these services for the neediest families.

However, in our quest for providing good quality child care for all the children of New Jersey, let us not forget the middle-class families, or as they were called earlier, "the working poor," who are willing and eager to seek out and pay for child care, but who may not be able to find it, or pay for the quality they seek.

It is the hope of NJAEYC that funds can be used to improve salaries for all child care workers, regardless of the socioeconomic class or the arena in which they serve. In order to attract and retain competent, professional staff, salaries must be competitive with those of other professionals, without regard to the setting, be it center-based care, family day-care, public school, or school-aged child care. Many of our middle-class children are served in private facilities that do not receive funds from sources other than tuition. In order for these programs to remain high quality, the providers often must increase tuition to parents who are not eligible for any supplemental programs. These parents must often make a choice between quality and what they can afford to pay. It is our obligation to help these programs continue to fill the need without a decrease in standards.

In addressing the needs of child care workers -- and I must applaud Betty for her heartfelt concern for her personal staff -- it is important to also identify the two groups of staff working with our children -- the degreed, professional staff, and the trained paraprofessional staff. Both groups are underpaid and overworked. Both groups provide vital services in many ways to children. These are groups of people who do

not respond to a time clock, but to the cry of a sick child. They do not respond to a regular lunch break period, but they do respond to the frightened child who may need an extra hug at nap time. This is not to say that working conditions should be primitive or kept where they are. The workday of the child care worker working with children whose needs are as varied as the day itself, is quite different from the workday of other professionals. In our discussion of the upgrading of working conditions of child care providers, including salaries and benefits, let us not create a situation that disturbs the delicate balance of who we are and what we do.

NJAEYC opposes the newly created certification system that eliminates the Early Childhood Special Certification. More children are spending longer hours in child care each year as a result of their parents' needs to work longer hours to survive economically. NJAEYC believes that these youngsters should be sharing this time with highly trained and well qualified staff. This goal can be achieved only through special preparation of the teachers involved with these young children. Preparation must include courses in child development, safety, and activities that are developmentally appropriate. NJAEYC, along with our national organization, believes in, and supports the "N" through Grade 3 certification. There are two bills that we are currently supporting -- A-3005 and S-1369 -- which would allow these changes to occur.

I would like to make one final comment with regard to something I heard here earlier, something I have not prepared or given a long, hard thought to, but feel that it needs to be addressed. Accreditation by the NAEYC is, indeed, one guarantee of a quality program. It is voluntary; it is time-consuming to administer; and it is expensive. This is where the private, non-funded, community-based programs fall victim, again, to economics. These are the programs that serve

our middle-class or working poor families. Many center directors whose pocketbooks are being pulled at daily, don't want to increase tuition to already struggling families. To allocate funds for voluntary accreditation when many of these centers are already doing a quality job, may not be in the realm of the private centers' budget. This is one explanation of the low number of accredited centers in New Jersey that was mentioned earlier.

Accreditation by my organization is certainly worthwhile and can ensure quality and can upgrade programs, but during these economic times, it is cost prohibitive to many fine centers. Perhaps this is one area where a grant program from the State could really work.

As our organization has previously testified, there are definite identifiable gaps in New Jersey's child care delivery system. I am privileged to testify in front of this Committee this afternoon, and am hopeful that together we can find a way to make affordable, available, quality child care a reality for all of the children in New Jersey.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you. Gail Malloy, from the Jackson Child Care -- the Board of Education, right? (no response from Ms. Malloy walking up from audience)

G A I L M A L L O Y: I am a child care provider. I am not a director; I am only a provider. We are a self-funded program under the auspices of the Board of Education.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Do you run a child care center for the Jackson School District? Is that it?

MS. MALLOY: Yes, it is under the auspices, but it is self-funded in the way that we do not get our salaries from taxpayers' money, but in some-- Of course, our electricity is paid for by that type--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: It is like an indirect subsidization?



MS. MALLOY: Right, correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: And you work there?

MS. MALLOY: I am a child care provider, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: You're it?

MS. MALLOY: Yes. In our entire program-- In our latchkey program, which runs from 7:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night, we have 400 children at four sites. We operate year-round. The only time we do not operate is when there are two days off; like, in other words, tomorrow and Monday. The reason we cannot operate at that time is because it is cost prohibitive. We have to pay janitors so much money to be there, and we cannot charge the parents. It is just cost prohibitive, basically. But we are open all summer, from the first day off from school until the day before the Labor Day holiday.

The program I work in is a kindergarten program. It operates from 7:00 in the morning until the child who goes to kindergarten in the afternoon gets on the bus and goes, and vice versa. The child who gets out of kindergarten at 11:30 then comes to us and stays with us until 6:00 at night.

The need for child care has been spoken about for preschool and school-age children. I believe if the Board of Educations were offered incentive programs, somehow incentive programs, they could support us, or they could even start up their own programs within the system, and there would be more growth in the area. In the school systems which do have this, it seems to be stagnated. Ours has grown. I believe in 1986, we had 15 kids in the program. We had two at one school, three at another school. If some of the special interest money -- and I will go into this in a bit -- could be expanded into this program -- okay? -- two problems could be solved.

Our program provides a positive atmosphere for all children, but in some areas we have kids who are going to go into Basic Skills. They are not really ready for

kindergarten. Because of home environment, or whatever, they do not have the basic skills. There are Basic Skill programs that the State pays for. Basic Skills is a State-funded program. We provide two services: We provide child care for those children, but we also provide every basic skill they could possibly need. We have the cutting; we have the gluing; we have the tracing; we have the gross motor skills, a lot of the skills that they are not even getting in kindergarten, because there is no time in kindergarten to do these things. If you walk into a kindergarten classroom, it is boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. They don't even have time to talk to the teachers. So, we can do all of that.

Plus, when they are with us, they are also with, not only basic-skill-needy children, but they are with other children, so they see where they have to go. They are not limited. You know, the competitive edge is there. If a child sees that another child is doing something, he or she has more incentive, I believe, to compete and to become what they need to become in society.

There is a lot more social interaction in a setup like ours. What I said is two things in one is, if a child who needs Basic Skills work needs to be taken out and put into a Basic Skills program, then what happens to the child care? Now where do they go? How do they get there? I am not saying we provide actual basic skills learning. What I am saying is, these programs provide the same type of things. I am not talking about for an older child. I am talking about basically on the kindergarten level.

There is no reason why a program like ours cannot be dovetailed into a Head Start program, if the facility is there. Our facility happens to be there. But there is no reason why some of these programs can't be -- that four-year-olds can't be brought in, or three-year-olds, because that is basically what they are doing in the Head Start programs.

The need for grants for families that are financially disabled, of course, is there. We now have 12 children on our waiting list for financial aid. But sometimes other criteria may be needed. We talked about the working poor, but there are other families that maybe have chronic illnesses or debilitating illnesses, where possibly they do have money, or, you know, they did have money. Now there is one parent working. A parent may be home. People say, "Well, they don't need child care. That parent is home." But maybe the parent cannot care for that child, whatever the reason, be it therapy -- or for a lot of different reasons.

I invite you to come to see our program. We were a pioneer. I believe we were one of the first in New Jersey to have such an extended day program. The kindergarten program has only been in existence for four years, but I believe it is one of the finest. We do not have an academic curriculum. Most of our learning is through incidental learning. We follow the kindergarten curriculum. We know what they are teaching in kindergarten. We do not do something before they learn it in kindergarten. We work along with them through incidental learning, and that type of thing. It is more for play and growth and skill work, than it is for academics.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you. I am glad you came here today. For the benefit of anyone who is not familiar with Jackson Township, it is one of the largest -- by square mile -- townships in the State. It is mostly rural, with pockets of suburban developments. So the people you service, I think, are a different type of people than perhaps some of the other providers who have appeared before our Committee have indicated.

MS. MALLOY: You're serving it at the child's school, too. What benefits us greatly is, you can go right to their teachers. You are either in the same building with their teachers, or-- There is a problem in the school. The teachers don't see-- How many teachers today see parents? They don't.

So if a teacher comes and says, "Look, could you talk to this parent for me?" or, "There is a problem here with this kid's homework. Would you sit down and spend some time with this kid's homework?" Feasibly, you have children five years old coming there at 7:00 in the morning and leaving there at 6:00 at night. How much more time are they even awake? I'm not awake a lot more than that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: I just want to comment: We are fortunate enough in my community to have a latchkey program, too. I think it is the finest thing I have seen in a long, long time. The very fact that the staff sits down with the children after school and works with them with their homework. You know, they do so much, and they get paid so little. But it is the finest program I know.

MS. MALLOY: I agree that it is a very good program. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORD: Thank you. That completes the list of people who have indicated that they wanted to testify. If there is anyone here who wishes to testify who is not on this list, I will make the time available. (no response) If not, then I want to thank everyone for coming, for offering their expertise, their testimony, and for helping us with the task that is before us. Thank you.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)