
Council Meeting

of

ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN

ASSEMBLY BILL No. 715

*“Testimony concerning the availability of Federal and State monies for day care initiatives,
and the General Assembly initiated day care package entitled
‘Progressive New Options in Day Care Initiatives’”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 11
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: September 17, 1998
2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Rose M. Heck, Chairwoman
Assemblywoman Marion Crecco, Vice-Chairwoman
Assemblyman E. Scott Garrett
Assemblyman Gerald J. Luongo
Assemblywoman Nellie Pou
Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg



ALSO PRESENT:

Miriam Bavati
Council Aide
Office of Legislative Services

Tasha M. Kersey
Assembly Majority
Council Aide

Mary Alice Messinger
Assembly Democrat
Council Aide

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Donna M. Taaffe Legislative Chair Family Day Care Organization of New Jersey	6
Isabel Roach Chair Legislative/Government Action Committee New Jersey Child Care Advisory Council	7
Gail Rosewater Director Office for Children Bergen County Department of Human Services, and Chair New Jersey Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Service	15
Beverly Lynn Child Care Administrator Division of Family Development New Jersey Department of Human Services	19
Ann Lynn Glazer Member Child Care Advisory Council, and Educational Consultant, and Representing Social Service and Block Grant Neighborhood Centers	31
Cecilia Zalkind Associate Director Association for Children of New Jersey	33
Walter C. Kowalski Assistant Legislative Counsel New Jersey State Bar Association	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

APPENDIX:

Testimony submitted by Isabel Roach	1x
Testimony submitted by Donna M. Taaffe	2x
Testimony and charts submitted by Gail Rosewater	6x
“Bright Beginnings Child Care Facilities Loan Fund: Questions and Answers” submitted by Beverly Lynn	17x
Letter addressed to Assemblywoman Rose M. Heck from Cecilia Zalkind	25x
Letter addressed to Members of the Assembly Advisory Council on Women from Walter C. Kowalski	27x
“Progressive New Options in Day Care Initiatives: Summary of Bill Package”	28x
Letter addressed to Senator Diane Allen from Lorraine Cooke, Ed.D. President New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children	31x

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

APPENDIX (continued):

	<u>Page</u>
“Expanded Child Care: The NJFCCPA’s Position on Expanded Child Care Homes” submitted by New Jersey Family Child Care Provider’s Association	32x
Memorandum addressed to Assemblywoman Rose M. Heck et al Assembly Advisory Council on Women from Barbara DeMarco Reiche through Nancy H. Becker Public Affairs Associates	33x

rs: 1-42

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROSE M. HECK (Chairwoman): Ladies and gentlemen: I am sorry that there was a delay, but we had to attend a swearing in of an Assemblyman in the Chambers.

I know that it is getting towards the hour when traffic is going to get heavy, so I am going to ask you to keep your comments as brief as possible because we have been through this before, as you know. Some of these bills have been released from two committees, and others are still being held in abeyance and being worked on.

What I would like you to do is be succinct in the manner in which you are going to give your constructive criticisms and/or your commendations for the work being done. Keep in mind that the childcare bills are an absolute necessity in this day and age, and we should be moving in that direction in a very positive way and to make certain that we stand together in making child care problems a thing of the past. So this is again to me a very positive move for the Advisory Council on Women to continue and put some closure on some of these bills or to move ahead with any constructive ideas that you might have.

The Advisory Council on Women was put together a number of years ago, by resolution -- was an idea that I felt had to come to pass because there are still many, many loose ends that affect women's lives, children's lives, and families' lives. We have been very successful in moving some very dramatic bills that people said would never happen. They have happened, and they are continuing to happen. So that's why, when we look at child care, I want this to be done in a positive way so that we don't get ourselves stuck in

the muck and the mire of the negatives, but make things better by working together, focused on the results of something positive.

So I will open this first Advisory Council meeting-- Just remember that the appointment that I received came late in this session so that is why-- We will be having monthly meetings. This will not be one meeting and then no meeting. These will be monthly meetings. I have asked the Speaker to allow us to have it on the regular CD committee days.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Just on behalf of the Minority members of the--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You have never been a minority in your life. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Well, as women, we're usually in the minority anyway, but anyway-- I would like to welcome you back as the Chairperson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: We're delighted to have you back.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I never left as a member, you know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: As most of you know, Assemblywoman Heck took a brief hiatus as Chairperson--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But never as a member.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: --and is back to motivate the Committee back to regular meetings.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Thanks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

As you know, we have two of our original -- we have our original members, Loretta Weinberg and Scott Garrett.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Seems like old times.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It does, doesn't it, Scott?

I do want you to know that the first meeting we ever held was at William Paterson College. It was very, very good. It was kind of a brainstorming meeting which went on for hours and hours. And we do have, in essence, what we call the original group.

An advisory council includes all of you. So, when you want to be included in everything we are doing, over and above these meetings, give us your -- send us your name and address, and you will be advised of everything we are working on, even in preliminary stages. That is how it came about to get so many good bills in so many areas.

Scott Garrett has been hosting meetings up in northern New Jersey, and we move around. It's the best part of what we do. We did the 48-hour bill. And, as you all know, Loretta and I double-teamed to amend the Assembly because they thought they were making great changes. We held a very -- what can I say -- aggressive meeting at Holy Name Hospital which changed the course of those bills by amendment and made them what they are today. And they were used as a national example, as are many of the bills coming from this committee (*sic*) --even though we are not a standing committee. The Advisory Council has absolutely been the genesis of many, many changes.

So, again, Loretta has introduced herself. I would also like to introduce a young woman who has been involved in human services in the Paterson area, who is an Assemblywoman and has a very good background and who is also a member of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and is doing an outstanding job there, too. It is Nellie Pou.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

First, let me just say that it is going to be a great pleasure for me to serve on this committee (*sic*). I am looking forward to it. I am excited. I think that listening to you and some of the work that you and Loretta and other members on this committee have done-- I am very happy to be a part of this, and I certainly hope to move things forward and along with -- certainly with the hopes of learning from the public -- any and all of the recommendations that can be helpful to move things forward with this committee. I look forward to today's meeting and the ones to come.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

And, of course, one of our newest members, Assemblyman Gerald Luongo, who is an educator and a mayor.

You can tell them a little about yourself.

ASSEMBLYMAN LUONGO: Thank you very much.

I am looking forward to serving on this committee (*sic*). I want to thank the Chairwoman for giving me this opportunity. It will be exciting, and I am going to learn. I have been in education all my life -- 35 years, recently retired. I am on the Education Committee, Local Government and Housing. I am also the Mayor of Washington Township in Gloucester County. I am in

my third term there. I am looking forward to serving on this and-- I also am a perpetual student, so I am here to learn. I am wide open: My mind is always open, and my eyes are opened even wider.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You're welcome.

Scott Garret, if you would like to just say a few words--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Nothing other than to welcome you back as Chairwoman and--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much, Scott.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: I salute and commend you on -- certainly on your dedication to this issue and all the hard work you have put in the past, as well as the people who are in the room today. They are really what drives this committee (*sic*) as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Of course, another original member of our team is Assemblywoman Marion Crecco, who is very devoted to many issues and has been a dear friend to all of us and who has given a lot of her support and her insights.

Marion, please--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

I am very glad to be here again, and I am very glad to be serving with you again. This is something that is-- All of us who are on this task force (*sic*) -- It's close to our hearts, and we are all very, very strongly interested in

children and their future. So I am especially pleased that we have started the task force again.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We're going to begin with-- I am going to ask you-- This is not school, but I would like you to raise your hand because I am trying to find out who of the people who have signed up are still here.

MS. KERSEY: She is not here. (referring to sign-up sheet)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: She is not here. I don't have to know this. You know who all these people are. Are they here? They don't have to raise their hands.

This is the Charlie McCarthy Act -- anybody is that old and remembers that. (laughter)

Donna Taaffe is here.

Isabel Roach is here.

Gail Rosewater is here.

Beverly Lynn is here.

Good. We will begin with Donna. Donna is the Legislative Chairperson for the Family Day Care Organization of New Jersey.

And you are going to be speaking in general, Donna?

D O N N A M. T A A F F E: That is correct.

Before I speak, I would like to-- If it's all right with the committee (*sic*), I would like Isabel Roach from the Child Care Advisory Council-- Could she speak first? Would that be all right?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: She can. She can be the entire spokesperson.

Go ahead.

ISABEL ROACH: Good afternoon, Assemblywoman Heck and the members of the Advisory Council on Women. I have had the pleasure of working with Assemblywoman Heck as a member of the Junior League State Public Affairs Committee. I am happy to be here today but in a different capacity. I am the new Chair of the Legislative/Government Action Committee for the New Jersey Child Care Advisory Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for including the Child Care Advisory Council in the discussions of this proposed package of day care initiatives. The Child Care Advisory Council applauds your efforts to address the current child care and early education issues in our state. We feel, however, these are important issues that require more time and collaboration, as we discussed with you at the group meetings in the past.

As you know, the Child Care Advisory Council is a statutory body created by the New Jersey Legislature in 1984 to advise the government on issues and policies affecting the delivery of child care services to children and families. The Child Care Advisory Council is an umbrella organization made up of many representatives from the child care community in our state.

These member organizations, some of which are here today, like the Family Day Care Organization of New Jersey and others, to give testimony on this package and provide you with information on possible funding sources-- As you will hear, there are specific concerns about using the legislation, in this form, to enhance and expand child care opportunities. We still feel that these bills are a work in progress. We would like to continue our involvement

with you to revise them and amend the language in them so that we can address some of our concerns.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You're speaking in general. A number of these bills are -- have been released from two committees already.

MS. ROACH: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You know which ones they are?

MS. ROACH: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Are we talking about those two? When you say a work in progress, once they have gone through committee and Appropriations, they are far from a work in progress.

MS. ROACH: Well, no. We have, with our member organizations-- We do have some members who have supported these bills and others who are still-- We haven't come to a consensus on whether to take a position on these bills or not. We have been willing to work with them and collaborate so that we can come to a decision on part of the child care community.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I think when we reach the point -- bills having come through two committees, including Appropriations, you are stretching the point because unless and until we have consensus -- maybe never-- The point is that sometimes things have to go forward, and then you return to it, the way we did with the Domestic Violence Task Force.

MS. ROACH: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You have to take a part of them and move ahead, watch them in their progress, and then come back and say, "There are glitches or that we can refine or strengthen them."

MS. ROACH: And our member organizations did that. We did have some amendments that were made to--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And that we put through.

MS. ROACH: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes, I remember that.

MS. ROACH: And today I just wanted to let you know that the member organizations are here to give you testimony on the specifics of those bills.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I want you to remember how we get to the end of the road when we focus on something.

If we continue to be fragmented in the manner in which we have proceeded, we will never have child care. There are so many bills out there requiring attention and money that by the time you reach that perfection point there won't be anything left.

Because we have waited-- I want you to know that when we first started the Advisory Council on Women, this was one of the top priorities. You will recall that. We did that. Then there was so much confusion as to, "Well, I want this and I want that," they started to go this way and that way, and we started to focus on other issues such as domestic violence and the well-being of children in foster care and things of that nature. So, please, don't let child care be pushed to the end of the line again because we are looking for that perfect bill. Let's move in it with some of them or all of them, whichever the case may be, but don't scuttle them as they move along because you will never have it happening in any way, shape, or form.

I think it is important for us to know that sometimes, within the legislative process, we do step by step and build, not ignore but build, and take everything as you said-- When we had that meeting, I thought it was very good. We did a wonderful job that-- You gave us very good input, and we appreciate it. You made the bills better, and there is no doubt about that.

So I would like you to be specific in the areas-- Are we now going to see that we're going to have a problem with the child care bills that have passed those two committees? When they get to the floor, are we going to have problems? I would like a heads-up if you're moving in that direction -- that you're going to say to the Speaker, "Don't put these bills up." I would like to know where you are coming from. When you said it's a work in progress, that is kind of a caution sign to me.

MS. ROACH: The bills that have not passed committee yet.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, all right. I feel a little better now.

MS. ROACH: And we do--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Because some of them are moving.

MS. ROACH: We do have organizations here that will speak specifically to the bills that--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay, because again the sponsors of those bills will take it very seriously and take it into consideration. I myself had a bill come out of committee this morning that a number of the pharmaceuticals came to me and said, "We can't do X, Y, and Z. Here are two or three amendments that I want you to put in." I said, "They look good." And when I went into committee, the bill came out, and they said, "You didn't

put in the amendments.” Well, the point is that when you tell me about something, I have to analyze it and look at it in the whole context, and then, if I like it, I can amend it before it gets to the floor. But again they have to be really good points. These were really good points, but I have to look at it with some time. If you come at the last minute with some amendments, sometimes what you perceive to be an improvement can be a detriment to the bill. So give the legislators, who are the sponsors, the opportunity to listen, digest, and evaluate. Okay?

MS. ROACH: Our representatives have worked with the sponsors to amend this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Good.

MS. ROACH: In the ones that have not moved, we would like to continue the involvement and working with you to revise them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MS. ROACH: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Now, I think we have--

You want to come up now?

MS. TAAFFE: Sure.

We are doing exactly what you just said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I just didn't know if you had a group ahead of you that you wanted to speak.

MS. TAAFFE: I am sorry.

We're doing exactly what you said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Good.

MS. TAAFFE: I was not at the last meeting where the Assembly met with the legislative Advisory Council. However, when I came in as Legislative Chair of the Family Day Care Organization -- my name is Donna Taaffe -- the first thing I did was meet with our statewide committee. We represent over 21 statewide organizations who recruit, train, and monitor family day care providers. I am talking about bill A-715. That is what I will address. I am not going to read my statement -- you have that, but I will just highlight parts of it.

We invited Assemblywoman Marion Crecco to come to our statewide meeting. It was a wonderful meeting. At that meeting she told us-- We mentioned several concerns. She asked us to get together and put it in writing. In addition to doing that, we came up with a list of some amendments. We also met with the New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. You will hear from Gail Rosewater later. We also met with the New Jersey National Association of Education for Young Children. We also met with the Providers Organization. All organizations said deal with child care. In doing that, we came up with a variety of amendments to make a bill work. Assembly Bill No. 715 would expand how many children a registered -- at the moment -- family day care provider would care for, five to ten children. We also, by the way, met with Bill Connolly from the Community Affairs Department over building codes. If we are going to expand, what are the building codes to have up to ten children in a home? We have had several meetings with him.

Through all of this, our four statewide organizations have come up with the following: We need a two-tier system. We need a system that exists right now for five and under -- having taken care of family day care children. The new system for six to ten -- they need-- We put down a variety of things. You will see our list attached. From CPR to -- they have to be mandatory registered. We don't want, in our neighborhoods, ten children being cared for by someone who is not registered and monitored by the State. We are willing to work with you.

The next thing is that I know you are looking for money, and I can't tell you that or numbers. What I could do is-- I called the Children's Foundation in Washington to get how many people -- how many caregivers are registered throughout the country. There are over 290,000. Of that amount, 14 percent care for six or more children. So those were the only figures that I could come up with. Now -- the State will talk later -- we know that to register-- To recruit, register, train, and monitor one provider, we're talking about close to \$700. We're talking about-- We want a provider, and we want an assistant provider, both trained in CPR and the basic training. We also want to be part of the regulatory process. I put that in our statement. We have already talked to the Borough of Licensing and the Department of Community Affairs, and we have also talked with the Division of Family Development. We want to part of that regulatory process of coming up.

Our amendment to A-715 is to change-- We want two systems. We want the care of children five or under in the home a family day care provider. If you care for six to ten children, that is called an expanded child care home. So that's the thrust of what I had to say.

I am very-- We're very thankful for Assemblywoman Crecco meeting with our organization because she was the one that really helped us and told us to put it in writing because we had-- There were over 30 people that she met with from all over the state. So we have now put it in writing and we're to the next step.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Good.

Yes, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: I know that when this package went in, this was the one bill that caused the most discussion. It seemed to have the most problems attached to it. I don't know that this might-- It might not be a fair question because I am not sure if Assemblywoman Crecco has gotten this in writing before this or that this is the first time that you are seeing it -- on how you feel or even if you are ready to respond in terms of this two-tier system.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Well, Assemblywoman, we have just had a change in staff, and Mike Rodak, who has been working with us, has left to join the seminary, and so we have a new person who will be working on it and will contact you and work with you on this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: I worked with somebody different.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: So now we're in transition.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: From the Legislature to the seminary--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Yes, that is something.

We will be-- But I don't really believe I have a problem because I already discussed it with them, and Michael was working on it, and now we're giving it to another staff member.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: If I may, this is the first time-- I have heard about the problems earlier, as I said, when the bills went in, and this is the first time I have seen this compromise, if I could call it that.

MS. TAAFFE: It really is. And not only through--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: And it looks, at first glance, as if it is something substantive that we might be able to work with. So how we go about this-- We'll await your direction.

MS. TAAFFE: Really--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Chairwoman, it is doable. We can work with this.

MS. TAAFFE: That's wonderful. We have four statewide organizations, and she got us going. She really did. So we did what you asked us to do.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's good.

MS. TAAFFE: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And we thank you very much for your sincerity in moving in that direction.

We have Gail Rosewater.

G A I L R O S E W A T E R: Well, this is my first time testifying in such an awesome environment. Most of my testimonies have been in front of the Departments.

I first wanted to say that I feel very honored to have been asked to testify today. I wanted to thank you, Assemblywoman Heck. I also feel very proud that both you and Assemblywoman Weinberg are from Bergen County, and it is nice to see you here.

I brought copies of my testimony. I didn't know exactly what was expected of me or what you wanted me to bring with me. I won't read it. I will do the highlights.

I am the Director of the Office for Children in Bergen County, and I am here representing that Office today. It also happens that I am the Chairperson of the New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, which we call NJACCRRRA (indicates pronunciation), which Donna was just referring to. It's an Association of all the unified child care agencies, or sometimes we call ourselves the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. There is one of us in each county in the State of New Jersey. We are contracted by the Division of Family Development to operate child care services, subsidy, family child care registration, Work First New Jersey subsididy, referral, Technical Assistance and Opening Centers, and a variety of other training and technical assistance services that have to do with child care.

We-- As part of what I have brought, I included the joint position paper from the Family Day Care Organization and NJACCRRRA on Assembly Bill No. 715 because I didn't know if you had that in writing. We worked very hard on our compromise. It was not, necessarily, the easiest thing, but we were very proud of it, and I wanted you to have a copy of it today.

The direction that I got for what you were interested in hearing about was just a tiny bit vague, so I hope that what I am going to say today is relevant to what you are asking to hear about. One of my greatest concerns, which Assemblywoman Weinberg has heard about very recently, over the summer, is the cost of the reimbursement rate that is paid for child care subsidy in the State of New Jersey. It's \$132 a week for infant care. That is what is paid to a licensed child care center to take care of an infant. But when Bergen County did a survey of what it costs -- the average cost and not the highest cost -- the average is \$164 a week for someone to send their infant to a child care center in Bergen County.

What it means for Work First New Jersey clients and New Jersey Cares for Kids parents who are the low-income working poor is that out of their own pocket they have to pay \$32 a week to have their infant cared for. And when they are making \$5.15 an hour -- \$200 a week -- it is 16 percent of their income. It is too much. What we are finding is that Work First New Jersey clients and NJCK families are not being given parental choice, which is what so much of our child care subsidy system is based on. They are often forced to take the lowest bidder and are not placing their children in good programs or placing their children in programs that they end up switching very often because they are dissatisfied with the care, or they can't go to work because they are worried about their child being safe.

I do acknowledge the Governor's Bright Beginnings Package increased the reimbursement rate for child care significantly over the past year, and I am very thankful for that, but these current rates that I have quoted you are still what the difference is between the State reimbursement rate and what

it costs in Bergen County. I am sure that there is some other counties, like Morris and Somerset, that are having similar problems.

The other thing that I wanted to mention is the-- In the original legislation for some of the other bills, which I am sorry I can't tell you exactly which bills had this language in it, but there was-- In a couple of the pieces of legislation, there was reference to regulating flexibility and flexible regulation. I just want to mention that in the State of New Jersey, the professionals in early childhood, over many years, joined together to establish what we consider to be New Jersey's floor of quality, below which we will not accept the provision of care for our children. Any of these bills, as they are implemented-- I don't know if this is part of the legislation or if it is -- when it becomes a bill if it is something that gets passed on to the Department of Human Services to ensure that it happens. As new child care programs are created, it is extremely important that they are programs that must meet current licensing standards and that we don't accept anything less than current licensing standards. We, of course, would like to see licensing standards continue to improve over the years as we learn more and more about what children need from good child care.

So, as the others have done, I offer you my assistance as the Director of the Office for Children, and I also offer you the assistance of the New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to look at any of the particulars of the legislation.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

Of course-- Beverly.

BEVERLY LYNN: Good afternoon. I also brought a copy for each of you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much.

MS. LYNN: --of my testimony.

I am here on behalf of the Department of Human Services and the Division of Family Development. I am pleased to provide testimony to the--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The microphone-- That's the recorder. The one next to you is the microphone. If it is red it is on. (referring to PA microphones)

MS. LYNN: If it is red--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's it.

MS. LYNN: Okay.

My testimony will focus on the utilization of Federal and State appropriations used to improve the quality of child care here in New Jersey.

Thousands of children between the ages of 0 and 13 receive care in over 3400 child care centers, which include day care, Head Start, and school-age child care programs in over 4000 registered family day care homes and a significant number of unregulated care arrangements each day. Just during the month of May 1998, the Department of Human Services provided subsidized child care services to over 33,000 children. New Jersey receives funding through the Child Care and Development Fund which allows the State to provide child care subsidies to parents who participate in Work First New Jersey, our welfare reform program, and to low-income families. Availability

of quality child care services are critical to sustaining and increasing New Jersey's workforce.

Federal regulations governing the Child Care and Development Fund require states to expend, at least, 4 percent of the CCDF for quality initiatives that seek to improve child care services. The 4 percent are calculated based on the total Federal funding received this spring earmarked for infant, toddler, and school-age child care and special needs initiatives. Each year, New Jersey has exceeded the minimum requirements for quality set-aside in expenditures.

Most of you are aware of the Bright Beginnings initiative announced by Governor Whitman in April of 1997. Over \$1.5 million was utilized as ongoing funding to support those initiatives during Federal Fiscal Year 1998. The Bright Beginnings initiative consisted of six components: grants and loans to increase the availability of child care in New Jersey-- I would also like to add that the loan program was recently announced on August 17. And I brought packets here for you, so you can see what the loan program consists of.

The loan program is available to any individual, agency, or corporation that is interested in increasing or expanding child care programs in their particular community. The loan program currently funds, at 5 percent, a maximum of one-third, or \$75,000, for any particular loan. So, for example, if you're requesting a loan for \$300,000, the maximum you can get under the Bright Beginnings Loan Fund would be \$75,000 at the 5 percent interest rate.

We are working with the Economic Development Authority and also the Community Loan Fund of New Jersey and Child Care Collaborative

because they are providing technical assistance to agencies and corporations who are applying for these funds to assist them in identifying other dollars that would match the amount that we are providing for them. For example, if you are applying for \$300,000, you get \$75,000 from the Bright Beginnings Facility Loan Fund at 5 percent, and the collaboration will assist you in finding the other \$225,000 at a marketable interest rate.

In addition to the grants and loans that we've provided, funding to increase parent consumer education regarding child care was also part of the Bright Beginnings initiative. Planning grants to encourage and facilitate collaboration among child care, Head Start, and school districts in the Early Childhood Program Aid and Abbott school districts, the development of the New Jersey Center for Professional Development at Kean University, and the expansion of Family Child Care providers.

Up until Bright Beginnings was announced, the Department only provided approximately \$150,000 for family day care registration. With the Bright Beginnings initiative, we have put in \$1.3 million to increase the number of family day care providers. At that time, we had 2500 people on waiting lists waiting to be trained to become family day care providers. This is just to give you an idea of the numbers that we have been dealing with.

Quality set-aside funding has been used to provide training, technical assistance, and support services to school-age child care providers and services to children with special needs, to support Head Start programs with wraparound and comprehensive services through Head Start-like contracts, to initiate a Child Development Association scholarship program, to provide school-based youth services to children of teen parents, and to support child

care resource and referral agencies in their provision of services to all parents and providers in our state. And Gail Rosewater talked a little bit about the services they provide. In addition, the Department has made a commitment to support the existing child care infrastructure by offering grants to abate life safety violations and maintain the level of funding for family day care registration.

The quality set-aside provided additional dollars this year to hire licensing inspectors to ensure annual inspections, funding to support child abuse record checks for staff employed in child care center programs-- This started in April. Every individual in a center -- who is employed in a center must have a child abuse record check to see whether they have ever been -- whether there has been any child abuse substantiated in regards to them working with children or in regards to any child that they have been involved with. Also to increase the availability of school-age child care programs and to support a research project that will recommend options to improve informal, unregulated care. Now, informal, unregulated care is what we know as approved home care. That is where a family, or parent, can select a family member, friend, or neighbor to care for their child. That is unregulated care. However, we do have a health and safety checklist. Inspectors go out and, actually, walk through the home and do a check of the home.

In Federal Fiscal Year 1999, New Jersey's quality set-aside will increase to approximately \$6.4 million. A significant portion of those dollars will be used to maintain existing services and expand on others, as well as address additional licensing requirements. And on here I have one which is professional development. As of October 1, every staffperson in a licensed

child care center will be required to have eight hours of professional development every year, and administrative staff will have to have 12 hours. So we will also be putting additional dollars into that to assist with that.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: With the additional funds, has the waiting list for family day care registration been reduced?

MS. LYNN: It was eliminated, at one point, but I do believe, in some counties, that number may be increasing somewhat. Initially, it was totally eliminated.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: But now it is starting to grow again.

MS. LYNN: It may be growing again, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Given the testimony that Ms. Rosewater gave about the fees -- she spoke mostly about Bergen County -- is there a differential in terms of the different regions of the state in what the average cost might be from one region to another?

MS. LYNN: Right now, we have one statewide maximum reimbursement rate for the entire state. It doesn't matter whether you are in the northern portion or in the southern portion.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Has that ever been considered?

MS. LYNN: It has been looked at. However, at this point, we recently did a market rate survey, and those results are not totally completed

at this time. But the Federal government says that we provide equal access to all parents if we are paying at or above the 75 percentile. The rate that we currently have is significantly below the 75 percentile. I can't give you any exact numbers, but we will be -- the Department will be coming out with a report regarding those percentages.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Through the Chairperson, can we ask that we be apprised of that report when it is completed?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Because, obviously, that is a big issue when a parent cannot -- absolutely cannot -- afford to pay that amount, that percentage of their income for child care. They either can't go to work or their child is put very inappropriate circumstances.

MS. LYNN: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I have noticed in the newspaper ads, etc., that a lot of organizations have joined together, as a unit, to provide after-school care on a regular basis. So does that mean that the number of available after-school programs have grown, or is it just me seeing all those things?

MS. LYNN: No, the number of centers statewide have grown, but we recently had a grant for family-friendly centers and for community-based organizations who were interested in opening or expanding school-age child care programs. So you will see even more.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I see a joining together of the schools and the Boys and Girls Clubs in many areas, and their dollar amount

seems to, when they join as a group, become healthier. Is that because they have facilities already?

MS. LYNN: That's correct. The school district has the facility. Usually, there is no additional overhead because the lights are already on and the custodial staff may already be there. You will find that many school districts are, in fact, opening after-school programs because it is a little more convenient for parents. They don't have to worry about the child being picked up on the bus and driven to another location. So we have seen a large number of school districts opening programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That-- And regionally there is no exception. It's just happening.

MS. LYNN: It's just happening.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Which is very good.

MS. LYNN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And the home and day care centers-- Is that increasing?

MS. LYNN: Yes it is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It is.

One of the reasons I am saying that is one of my children takes care of children at home. I know one of the children moved to another state. It took quite a while before she had another child come in because there weren't that many on the waiting list. So I am saying there must be--

MS. LYNN: I think the market itself is growing because people feel that there is a need for more child care, and folks are just investing into developing programs. The important part, however, is the quality of those

programs. And that is what we are focusing our dollars on -- trying to improve the quality of the programs that are out there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Very good. Well, I just think it is a plus to hear that -- that people aren't knocking on your door, three or four at a time, and you're sending them away. That was the case, only about, three years ago because she was being inundated with requests because she is trained and she has all-- And she enjoys it. She has children of her own.

Again, I think that from that I kind of picked up-- I wanted to ask you if there are an increased number of people becoming involved. It is very nice because women, like my daughter, like child care and like to be at home with their children. So it's a very nice way to stay at home until they are grown.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Madame Chairwoman, I would like to just ask a couple of questions.

You started to mention, with regards through the Chair, that the Bright Beginnings Program--

MS. LYNN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: --that there was \$1.5 million appropriated, and that consists of six components between grants and loans.

MS. LYNN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Of those-- Could you just explain that a little bit to me? We're talking about-- You mentioned something-- Is this going to be providing grants or loans to facilities that are going to provide the training for the child care provider, or would it actually be providing the child care?

MS. LYNN: Okay. First of all, the Bright Beginnings initiative-- The total amount was \$8.5 million. In Federal Fiscal Year 1998, we used \$1.5 as ongoing funds to support what we did last year. There was \$4.6 million for the \$500,000 contingency amount that was put aside just for grants. We awarded grants in January to 110 agencies and individuals to expand child care, specifically for infants and toddlers. The Department knew that there was just not enough infant and toddler care out there. The other indication that sort of pushed us toward that was that with Work First New Jersey, when the participant's child -- youngest child becomes 12 weeks old, they are required to participate in some type of work activity. So we knew that there was going to be a need.

Now, when we did Bright Beginnings, it was not targeted for low-income families. It was a statewide initiative because we realized that infant care was needed everywhere -- in every community. So, as a result of that, that is where the grants came from. We were awarded those grants. We haven't realized the total number of those slots that will actually be developed because the contracts do not end until September 30, which is just another week or two away. So we'll have an idea of what our numbers are in terms of how many actually slots were created.

The loan program is separate because, of course, you have to pay that money back. The intent of the loan program, as well, was to increase the number of child care slots in the state. With the loan program, we are requiring a very complete needs assessment from individuals who are applying so that we are making sure that there is a real need for child care in that particular community that they want to open a program up in.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Excuse me, in conjunction with that-- When you get those numbers, could you send it to this committee so that we are aware.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Madame Chairwoman, I just want to add to-- You mentioned a waiting list of 25,000 and that that list was, in fact, satisfied. But only recently there is additional people on a waiting list. Did I understand that correctly?

MS. LYNN: Twenty-five hundred.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: I am sorry.

MS. LYNN: Twenty-five hundred.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: That makes a world of difference.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Is the waiting list hundreds or thousands?

MS. LYNN: No. I don't think it is that many at this point because most of the unified child care agencies have been having monthly training sessions. They are trying to keep that list as low as possible. However, when those Bright Beginning dollars end, we are back to our initial stable amount of funding which would not allow us to increase that number of providers any more than what we already have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: When you see a significant number, would you let this committee know?

MS. LYNN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: I am sorry, Madame Chair, just one last question.

Can we just take the scenario of the wealthier recipient who is currently on Work First now? Let's say that they are now in the program. They are now eligible or required to participate. They are in a day care program. They have completed their training and are now within that phase between the first and fifth year. How are we planning on ensuring that there is adequate day care provision being made to the number of welfare recipients that will soon be coming off of welfare, but obviously, we're looking to maintain and assist them in keeping day care beyond that of their current subsidy and go on to nonsubsidizing?

MS. LYNN: Okay, what happens now is after the participant has completed their work activity and found employment and their case is closed because of earnings, they will receive two years of transitional child care. At that time, they will pay a copayment based on their family size and income. When that two years of transitional child care ends, they are eligible, as long as they are still income eligible-- Our income eligibility begins -- well, is up to 200 percent of the Federal poverty level. They are then eligible to go into our New Jersey Cares for Kids program. It is a child care subsidy program for low-income working families.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Is that program at -- providing the number of slots needed to provide the number of day care-- Does that program--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Is there enough money to cover that?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: --provide enough care for that?

MS. LYNN: Well, we have a waiting list now. However, in January we had additional dollars, and we reduced the waiting list by 1000 children. What we--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: What is your current waiting list?

MS. LYNN: Well, the waiting list does fluctuate, so I would say somewhere around 3500 right now. The waiting list, however, in January was somewhere around 7000. What happens is there were people who were on this waiting list going back to 1992 when the program first started. Once people get on this program, unless the child ages or they are no longer income eligible or no longer working, they stay in the program until the child becomes 13 years old.

There is not a lot of turnover, unless you see people who are earning higher incomes or something.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN POU: Thank you, Madame Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Any other questions?

Yes, Marion.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Then you will give us an overview. You are going to send us an overview of this program -- an overview so that we can follow up on it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Follow up on it.

MS. LYNN: Yes. I am going to provide you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: See the need-- I think all of us are tuned in to what you said -- that the waiting list remains intact because there

is very little turnover and they age out. That is what we want to judge and see what is needed long range.

MS. LYNN: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: If, indeed, your waiting list is 3000, that seems unacceptable.

No other questions? (no response)

Ann Lynn Glazer.

A N N L Y N N G L A Z E R: I am Ann Lynn Glazer, and I am a member of the Child Care Advisory Council, and Educational Consultant. I am the most unexpert witness you will have today. I was asked to speak on behalf the SSBG, Social Service and Block Grant Neighborhood Centers. I have never worked in an SSBG Center, and I have never directed an SSBG Center, and I was supposed to have written testimony which got lost somewhere in cyberspace.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You can forward it to us later on.

MS. GLAZER: Yes, definitely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: When the lost is found.

MS. GLAZER: We will right this wrong.

I do, however, have one main point that I was asked to make today in addition to whatever there was in the testimony I never saw. That is in relation to bill A-305, about neighborhood centers.

Although the SSBG community-- For those of you who are new to this committee (*sic*), SSBG, Social Service and Block Grant Centers, are neighborhood centers that existed in the State of New Jersey for many years. It has been a lot of years. The SSBG community sees merit in each of the

other bills in this package. However, this particular bill, unfortunately, seems to reinvent a wheel that has existed for over 25 years. Neighborhood Centers, which meet all the criteria of this bill, have recently lost a significant percentage of their funding -- of their Federal funding. This is a great concern to the SSBG community. These cuts are significantly affecting the SSBG Centers that currently exist. At this time, the SSBG Neighborhood Centers feel that any funding that would be available to support the concept of Neighborhood Centers should be used to support currently existing Centers rather than starting a pilot project to, really, replicate what they are already providing to the community.

Another concern about funding, and I know funding is what you particularly want to hear about today-- Another concern about funding is that the way the funding issue is written into this bill, the fees were to come from licensing fees. The licensing fees, according to the information we were given by DYFS, would come to about \$175,000 a year in total. Divided among five demonstration projects, we are talking about \$35,000 per project, which would be wholly inadequate to fund -- to start Centers from scratch.

So the message that I have been asked to give today is that this particular bill-- We feel that any funding that could be found for Neighborhood Centers be used for the currently existing Neighborhood Centers and not to replicate what already exists.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Any questions? (no response)

MS. GLAZER: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

And now, Ceil.

This-- Walter Kowalski wants to come up with you. Do you want to start by yourself and then Walter?

CECILIA ZALKIND: That's fine.

Thank you, Assemblywoman Heck and members of this Council. I just want to say welcome back. I think, under your leadership-- We worked with this Council on a number of very important bills in the child welfare area. It is very nice to see things get started again.

I had a specific issue with one of the bills in the package. Before I comment on that, I really wanted to say, from a child advocacy perspective, child care is really at a crossroads, I think, in New Jersey and in probably every state across the country. On the one hand, you see enormous demands on child care and a very different climate for child care because of welfare reform. We have done some work in the last year with the Child Care Action Campaign in New York, talking to parents who are leaving welfare for work and who are entitled to transitional child care benefits. Looking at some of the barriers for them in accessing those benefits, we hope that the Action Campaign report comes out soon. We have also done a bit of work looking at what the process is for a parent who faces work requirements under (indiscernible) right now. It is quite overwhelming. It has led us to realize that this is a system that is focused primarily on work, not necessarily on the well-being of children in child care.

So, on the one hand, we have a changing environment around child care that is quite different -- very different from our public policy in the past. On the other hand, we see a really unique opportunity to do it right. The Comprehensive Education Improvement Act created the Early Childhood

Program Aid for 125 school districts in the state that have the poorest children in the state. This is an opportunity for everyone who cares about early child care education.

We have some concerns about whether this is being as well coordinated and handled as it should. If this committee meets regularly, I would urge you to take on this issue. It is a shifting environment that I think needs some leadership and direction.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, we all know there are growing pains involved with everything, but when it comes to children, we don't want the pain to be theirs. So I agree that we should keep a close eye on the system itself and make sure that we have support systems and regulatory systems that make sure that they are being taken care of properly.

But again any suggestions that any of you have in that regard, whether we have a meeting on this subject or not, send it to us and we will address it. There is no doubt because children are very important to us. The children of today can be either wonderful, productive adults of the future or sociopaths, depending on what we offer them today.

MS. ZALKIND: And certainly there has been increased documentation about the importance of the earliest years and what happens to kids afterwards.

What I came to talk about today was to comment on one of the bills in the package. I think ACNJ has been pretty vocal about its opposition to A-715. We have supported the other bills in the package, and we think they offer some interesting and creative alternatives to child care, but we have a lot of concerns about the bill which would expand family day care registration

allowing the family to take 10, rather than 5, children. We have testified on this before. We have not been involved in the process to suggest amendments. I listened to that because there are some areas that we might consider--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Just let me add, Ceil, to that. One of the concerns was that in many of the urban areas and very rural areas, that there was no regulation at all and people were just banding together as friends. I think that someone wanted-- The thought was to address it so that there would be some regulation. I don't think it was the sponsor's intent to cause any problem but to be more inclusive of those nonregulated homes, which we consider very dangerous. I think that is what that was. I think you-- The sponsor of the bill will be addressing--

MS. ZALKIND: Okay, and I think that's a very valid point. We received a letter about two months ago from a parent who had her child in child care in Newark and left early in the morning and came home late in the night and really didn't see what the setting looked like. One day she happened to come home unexpectedly early and went to a small, two-bedroom apartment in downtown Newark and discovered that the family day care provider was taking care of 13 children. She was appalled by the conditions--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Frightening.

MS. ZALKIND: She was appalled by the conditions that the two-year-old was subjected to. She wrote us a letter, which we reported to the Bureau of Licensing. They went out. This was not a registered family care. So you are exactly right. Those instances take place whether you have a bill that permits it or a bill that does not. We have a system in our state that is very weak when you talk about family day care. So voluntary registration

system only-- As you have heard, funding sets limits on how many people are registered. To have 2500 people who are willing to register but the State cannot afford to send someone out because of budget constraints is a problem. I think our concern is that weak enforcement system linked with what will appear as permission, even to those people who don't register, to expand the number of kids they care for could put children at significant risks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: At risk.

MS. ZALKIND: I listened to the prior testimony, and I think if this were recasted to a bill that looked at creating -- I know this term has been used before, a minichild care center recognizing a different type of child care somewhere between family day care and center-based care with a set of standards that are higher than those that exist for family day care now and doesn't reach the level of requirements, especially the facility requirements, for child care centers. That would be something that would be open to discussion. I would just urge that if this goes through, even in that midground category created, that it be a mandatory system. That that registration, if you have someone who is interested in caring for up to ten children, that that not be voluntary. That individual may be registered. That is not going to permit -- prevent the person who is going to do it anyway, but it gives some teeth to enforcement. If in the case we dealt with-- A mother goes out and finds that the child care setting she was trusting to take of her child is not doing what she had originally thought.

I have some written testimony. It goes through a background of why we feel this bill-- You heard some of it already. I understand you are looking at some of that.

Unless you have any questions, I am not going to go through the details of that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Do you have any questions, Marion?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: No.

What I would like to say is that we are addressing some of the concerns you have brought up. Also, there is another concept. The concept of the neighborhood -- it's not a center per se. There is a home within the neighborhood. All the parents know these people, and the children play in the same area and know one another. That concept would make many, many parents more comfortable with that setting. We're trying to-- It's a twofold thing. It's not just that we want to register or whether we want to oversee it and see that it is done properly, but we also agree with them that this is a good concept. The mom wants to keep the child in the neighborhood with those children that they play with and are used to. This is good for them also, as opposed to taking them to another strange environment. It is twofold. We certainly are taking all of that into consideration.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you. I understand that there is a balancing, certainly. I understand parental choice. My children are now older, but I remember the time when I struggled with child care. I had a lot of family support. I wasn't faced with being on my own and having to provide child care. Our concern is that when you allow more than five children, you change that nature of a family setting. That 10 children in a household-- And true, there are households that have 10 biological children. That is not as common as it once was. When you permit more children, you are changing the nature

and placing far more demands on things like the facility, the safety of the house, who is taking care of the children. Your bill does require an additional person to be present. It doesn't require that that person be an adult. Issues came up around training of that individual. It also may require some programming. Taking care of 10 children is a little different than taking care of 5. So I understand that issue around a parent who makes a choice for a more family-like setting -- and trying to really respect that choice.

I think the other issue, and maybe this is one that scares us a little bit, is there is always a balance of need and availability as you have heard already. It is tempting to think about expanding family day care because there are so many people out there who need child care. Our hope is that it is not done in a way that sacrifices quality or puts kids at risk. We have long had concerns about the approved homes category for families who are moving off welfare or who are meeting the work requirements of (indiscernible) -- having that opportunity to identify a family member or a friend who can babysit for their child. There is some, as Beverly Lynn pointed out, regulation of that. There is a visit to us that is a basic minimum. That's using government funds to support kids in settings that we're not so sure are adequate, or at least, they're not having questions raised about them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Any other questions, because Loretta wants to speak.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: No, I think--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Ceil, when you do have an opportunity to look at the compromise that was offered with this two-tier licensing-- The way I understand it, it would require mandatory licensing. We

would appreciate, I am sure, getting your comments on it when you have had a chance to review it in more detail.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you. I would really appreciate the opportunity to be able to do that.

WALTER C. KOWALSKI: Thank you, Chairwoman Heck. I am an Assistant Legislative Counsel with the State Bar. I am probably less of an expert on this than anyone in this room.

I just wanted to commend Assemblywoman Crecco for looking at the child care alternatives. We are here on A-715. However, our Children's Rights Committee and Women in the Professional Section believe that it would be inappropriate, at this time, to allow family day care providers to care for five to ten children because, like Ceil, we think that the regulatory scheme in place right now is inadequate to protect their health, safety, and well-being. We agree with all of the testimony provided by the Association for Children of New Jersey, and we would also be interested in looking into any compromises that come up.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No other questions? (no response)

I think that if you would like to come forward-- (directed to Ms. Taaffe)

MS. TAAFFE: (speaking from audience) The only thing--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No, no, you have to come forward if you are going to be -- because you are being recorded. You cannot speak from the audience. (witness complies)

MS. TAAFFE: The only thing I was going to mention is that in our list in the compromise, we did say it would be mandatory, especially when you are dealing with that size of -- caring of children. We would love-- I will share our compromise with them. We would love for them to be part of our committee. We have worked on, as you can see--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Ceil, you could do that in your extra time.

MS. ZALKIND: Believe it or not, we probably all know each other and talk to each other quite often. In fact, we're right down the street from each other in Newark.

MS. TAAFFE: We're two blocks away, I believe. So we will get together.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No other questions? (no response)
Thank you very much.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Is there anyone else who did not sign up who wishes to speak? (no response)

We'll anticipate the input you said you would provide, and we look forward to some progress in this legislative session -- in this year, actually. So your input is most welcome, and we will see you at other meetings.

Thank you very much, this meeting is--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Rose.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: This has nothing to do with this subject, but I-- There is something that has been on my mind. I know it is irregular, but we have an irregular advisory committee here, so-- I know that we are having difficulty -- or we are trying to advertise our Kid Care program, the health insurance program for children.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: I heard on TV, Libby Pataki advertising the program for New York. I guess it is a similar program but for New York kids. Maybe we could make some kind of recommendation that at least New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Jersey, where we all get the same major TV, that we could combine some kind of announcement among our four states for this program because they seem to be similar. Maybe really get out there and get the kids--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: May I suggest that Madame staff and OLS ask for an overview of the four states, and then we will see how closely related they are and then come up with that--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Talk about shared services. This would be a great way--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: If they are too far afield, it may not happen. Remember that Channel 9 has those little public announcements. So we can suggest things like that. In the meantime, if you can get a comparison of the four states--

MS. ROSEWATER: I just wanted to say one thing about Kid Care. When parents call us, which they do all the time, and say, "I have no insurance. Do you have any ideas?"-- We give out information about Kid

Care at least once a day, if not more. What the parents keep telling us is, “I make just a tiny bit over that-- I make \$10 over that, \$50 over, \$100 over the income guidelines.” When we called New Jersey Kid Care and said, “Gee, in Bergen County, in order to live here, very few people make under these guidelines.” They said, “Well, tell them to apply anyway, even though they make over the guidelines.” Unless we happen to say that to somebody, most of the people--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It wouldn't be that natural thing to do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEINBERG: Those are Federal guidelines?

MS. ROSEWATER: No, they are State guidelines.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, you know what, Gail, when we look at the comparison of the four states--

Miriam and Tasha, would you please look at the income levels for us. Maybe we should be making suggestions for a regional guideline.

Thank you very much, Gail. That was a good point.

I thank you very much for coming. We'll see you again.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)