

January 21, 2005

Honorable Chair Kaufmann & Committee Members.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come before you to voice my concerns for childcare funding and to ask for your support.

My husband and I are co-chairs of a childcare center in Missoula that is licensed to care for 49 children. Our center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and we are recognized by the State of Montana as a Two Star Quality program, the highest rating Montana awards.

I come before you today to ask that you please maintain childcare funding at its 2005 level by assuring that the State's biennium budget includes a total of \$26.9 million year for child care.

All of Montana's children deserve the best that we can give them by not only providing them with high quality child care programs, but by making those programs financially assessable to all parents and their children. Child care is expensive, quality child care cost even more so the question comes to how much are, our children worth? A quality child care program not only prepares our children to enter school healthy and ready to learn, but more importantly it prepares the children for success in school and life. Today, all of the research that has been completed supports that the early years, those prior to children entering kindergarten, our most vital for establishing their future learning ability.

Child care providers struggle constantly to survive financially and this is why it was so vital that the State adjusted the child care pay rate to the 75th percentile of the market rate last July. Until then there had not been a rate adjustment since 2000. And let me please emphasize that this was not a pay raise, but a rate adjustment. Up until this time many providers, including myself was at the point where we were going to stop caring for low income children, as the rising cost of care was driving us out of business. In 2004 our center provided jobs for 12 employees, with a total budget for the year of \$340,000. Of that, \$156,776 was paid out in payroll; \$6,942 was paid in State taxes, \$43, 238 in Federal taxes and \$4,600 in property taxes with an insurance cost of \$4, 850. This dollar figure represents only one child care

facility, and the money that it generates within our local communities, as well as to the State & Federal governments.

I could share many stories with this Committee of the day to day struggles that many of the parents in our Center face. These are good parents who like you, want the best for their children, and yet in today's economy the burden is great, and for some of our families they are being faced with choosing between quality care programs and inadequate ones, as well as leaving their children home alone because they cannot afford child care. About three weeks ago, I held a mother while she sobbed as she told me she had to pull her two children out of her Center. This young woman has three children, was in the last semester of college & receiving her degree. Why did she have to pull her children? Her husband is in the army reserves and was sent to Irag, and she could no longer afford to pay for child care and as a result, had to quit school. Today I have brought letters from parents in our Center, they are electricians, University professors, maintenance workers, accountants, students, they are mothers searching for jobs, they are middle class, they are low income, but each of them have a common bond, and that is the need for quality child care.

I would like to close by reading a portion of a letter that one of my parents, who is receiving child care funding.

Respectfully.



Judee Delancy
1205 SW Higgins, Apt. F
Missoula, Mt 59803
mdelancy@usa.net

Angel Childcare & Preschool Center 1011 Gerald
Missoula, Mt 59801
angelchildcare@usa.net