

From The Desk of Angela Russell

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To Whom it May Concern,

Good afternoon distinguished members of The Appropriation Committee! My name is Angela Russell and I am the Owner and Director of Arms of Love Family Academy which is located in the City of New Haven.

Like most parents of young children, many foster parents work outside the home and wholeheartedly agree that quality child care is a necessity. In addition to securing a place that is affordable and convenient, these parents look for high quality centers that provide a safe, nurturing, and predictable environment that lays the foundation for optimal growth and development.

Experiences child care providers who have performed this precious role for many years will readily tell you that this role is full of challenges and rewards. Although it is impossible to predict every challenge they might face as a provider, receiving timely payments for services rendered according to a mutually agreed upon contract should never be one of those challenges they have to bear on a continual basis.

In the early 2000's, I provided child care services to two foster families and I experienced difficulties with DCF not paying me in a timely manner. I faithfully provided child care services to these families until their foster child aged out of my program. Upon submitting my paperwork for each month, there would be times when I ended up waiting for several months before I would receive payments for services rendered from DCF. When I would call to inquire about the status of my payments, I constantly left the conversations feeling frustrated or as if I wasn't entitled to receive payments for services rendered.

Having to deal with this problem on a consistent basis took precious time away from me being able to give my best efforts and attention to the children in my care. Not to mention how I struggled with making ends meet regarding my business and personal obligations in a timely manner, ultimately affecting my credit in a negative way.

It is very disheartening to see that the same issues I had to grapple with as a provider over 15 years ago are the same issues providers are facing today. As a former Alder in the zCity of new haven, breaking down barriers to quality, affordable child care was always a constant issue I had to advocate for on behalf of my constituents. And to see that a state agency has garnered a reputation as being one of those barriers is unacceptable. How much longer are child care providers will child care providers be expected to provide quality child care services for our most vulnerable foster care community under these circumstances?

I am here today because a growing recognition of these problems have led a number of individuals and organizations to take steps to advocate for solutions that simplify and improve access to the continuity of high quality child care services every child deserves, foster parents depend on, and providers who are willing and able to meet and/or exceed the call of duty. We can no longer expect that business can go on as usual.

I respectfully and urgently ask that your committee will use your legislative power to bring forth the necessary solutions that resolve this issue by moving the money from DCF's budget to the Office of early Childhood and have Care for Kids handle all future payments.

Thank you for you attention and time.

Sincerely,

Angela Russell