

Good morning Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member McCarthy, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Linda Kostantenaco and I am the President of the National Child Care Association (NCCA). NCCA represents over 12,000 private child care centers throughout the United States. Our membership is comprised of independently owned and operated family run businesses, employing over a quarter of a million Americans; most of whom are women.

Our child care centers provide two vital components; education, along with a nurturing, healthy and safe environment. The balance of education and care is a crucial factor that parents consider when finding the best child care center for their kids. Further, our centers provide the peace of mind that enables parents to be productive during their working hours; working men and women are able to contribute to society while their kids learn and grow in child care centers across the country.

But not every center satisfies every need, and it should be noted the importance that parental choice be maintained. Such flexibility ensures parents the opportunity to find an appropriate child care center that satisfies their needs and the unique needs of their children. It is this array of choice that facilitates the best partnership between a family and their child care center.

When examining the need for parental choice, and the benefits private child care centers provide, it should also be noted the significance of parental education and understanding of the available choices in their community.

For example, it is important that we educate parents regarding the vital choice of identifying a licensed center that is regulated, inspected and monitored by regulatory agencies to insure that rules and regulations are kept at their highest standards. Our membership strives to offer the best care available, and it is these centers that ensure that high quality is met and maintained. Setting these standards ensures that such centers that receive private pay or subsidy funds for their children are performing at their best, and we should never compromise these values.

Regarding my own center, I am located in San Antonio, Texas and I

receive such funding for approximately 10% of the children in our care; in other communities throughout the U.S. the percentage of children receiving these funds can be as high as 95%. Such funding not only assists low-income families but also includes care for children in protective services and foster parent care. This reinforces the need to place children in an environment that is conducive to their needs and providing them a healthy and safe environment.

My center, the Kiddie Koop, employs 22 hard-working women and I would not be here sitting in front of you without their unwavering commitment to quality care. My staff are not only hard-working, but educated, and as a private child care operator I understand the vital role continuing education plays as part of maintaining a well-rounded, dedicated staff; providing them with training opportunities that will help them in the classroom is essential in their workplace environment. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to pay our employees what they so deserve as the profit margins within the child care industry is not significant, and a weakened economy only compounds this reality. Aside from salaries and maintaining an engaging center with toys and educational resources, I must also consider food, milk, utilities, gasoline prices for transportation, and many other costs that create significant challenges in operating a private child care center. Due to all of these outside economic forces, we are not always in the position to pass these higher costs on to the parents, leaving me to absorb them as best I can. You can imagine the difficult situation I find myself each year in awarding my staff with the pay they so deeply deserve; their genuine dedication truly becomes a blessing as we move forward each day.

That said, we offer a service to working parents that is essential to affordable care for their children while they try to improve their family's lives. These parents are working long hours, multiple jobs, or going to school to improve their own skills and education and the funding from the Child Care Development Block Grant Program (CCDBG) goes a long way in helping those families succeed. CCDBG assists low-income families in obtaining a safe, reliable and affordable place for their children while they continue to work for a better life. This program greatly supports the child care industry and it is comforting to know that this Congress is as vested in a child's care as I

am.

I thank you all for your dedication and attention regarding the child care industry and the unique needs of our centers and staff. Funding and supporting our industry allows parents the opportunity to keep succeeding in this country and gives their kids the opportunity to receive the nurture and education vital to their future success. I thank you Chairman Rokita for having me here today, and I look forward to your Subcommittee's questions regarding the private child care provider.