

November 8, 2011

Dear Governor Dayton:

In-home family child care providers have been uniting in Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME Council 5 and SEIU Kids First Local 284 since 2005. Both of our unions have worked successfully with 13 other states, which now recognize the right of child care providers to bargain collectively and have a voice in decisions that affect their work.

In other states where in-home family child care providers have organized their union, they have won real improvements to the child care system: increased subsidy rates with lower co-pays for parents, improved access to quality trainings, input into state policy that impacts their work, and access to affordable health insurance.

In order to build power for Minnesota family child care providers most effectively, our two unions have collaborated on statewide work, and share the work of organizing and representing providers at the county level. Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME Council 5 is organizing and seeks to represent all providers in the following counties: Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Benton, Big Stone, Carlton, Cass, Chippewa, Chisago, Clay, Clearwater, Cook, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hennepin, Hubbard, Isanti, Itasca, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Koochiching, Lac Qui Parle, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pine, Polk, Pope, Ramsey, Red Lake, Roseau, Sherburne, St. Louis, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, Washington, Wilkin and Yellow Medicine.

SEIU Kids First Local 284 providers are organizing and seek to represent all providers in the following counties: Anoka, Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Cottonwood, Dakota, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Jackson, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Mcleod, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Olmsted, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Scott, Sibley, Stearns, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, Winona and Wright.

While a majority of providers have signed authorizations in the areas listed above, some people have disputed that fact. To resolve the controversy, we feel the best way to determine majority support is to have the providers vote in each of the respective areas on whether they wish to be represented by their unions.

We request a union election for only the licensed in-home family child care providers who participate in the Child Care Assistance Program. This is a great opportunity for the state to maximize its investment in helping working parents to access family child care.

Once it is shown that providers wish to form a union, they should gain official recognition and a well-deserved seat at the table to improve the quality and affordability of child care. Recognizing their strong professional voice will benefit kids, parents and providers, as it has in other states.

Half of Minnesota's children are not prepared for kindergarten, according Ready 4 K; and many are living in poverty with poor nutrition. To address those urgent problems, we can't ignore the fact that 129,000 children eat and learn in the homes of family providers. Ensuring providers have direct input to the state's child care system will help the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education close the achievement gap and prepare children for school. Child care providers are invested in the families they serve and their professional voice will enhance the innovation that the Dayton Administration seeks for early learning.

The health of our economy depends in part on working families having high-quality, affordable and dependable child care, so parents can go to work with peace of mind knowing their kids are healthy, learning and safe. That's why unionizing child care will be good for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



Eliot Seide
AFSCME Council 5



Carol Nieters
SEIU Kids First Local 284