

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Parrish and I have been a licensed family child care provider in Rochester for more than 13 years. I love my job and cannot imagine doing anything else, yet I have been forced to consider closing my child care program due to many changes made by this legislature and an overly punitive oversight process by the Department of Human Services. I'm not alone. Thousands of child care providers have already closed their doors in the last 6 years and thousands more will if something is not done.

In spite of dozens of bipartisan recommendations from a legislative task force that should have led to sensible reform to reduce burdensome regulations, training and paperwork requirements and made changes to the harsh and punitive oversight system childcare providers have been subjected to at the hands of the Department of Human Services in recent years, this legislature engaged in closed door negotiations at the end of session without the opportunity for public testimony or input. The end result was more paperwork, more training requirements, more penalties for providers and an invasive background study that includes permanent entry into the FBI's Next Generation Identification database where child care providers, our partners and even our children age 13+ will have our fingerprints stored and routinely searched with convicted criminals. Our photographs will be stored in a database that has come under congressional scrutiny for their controversial facial recognition program. Mr. Chairman and committee members, this is not how our government is supposed to work. It's an insult to our constitution and a violation of the People's trust and faith in a representative government when elected officials exclude the People from participation in the lawmaking process when harmful regulations against them are pushed through without their knowledge or opportunity to contribute to the discussion! This legislature failed its constituents when it passed this legislation and you owe the people you represent an apology. It is your duty to make this right! Without a repeal of the invasive fingerprinting and photographing of my children, I will close my doors. An immediate consequence will be 10 fewer children without an opportunity to attend childcare in a licensed program where they are loved, nurtured and receive an exceptional early education.

I've reached out to the Department of Human Services to ask questions about this background study. Regina Wagner and Jim Janecek have not bothered to respond. The Department of Human Services is NOT working with providers and they're only communicating with those willing to attend their "listening sessions". They have no incentive to improve relations and communication so long as this legislature is willing to give them everything they ask for and additional funding to carry it out. The Governor, the legislature and the Department of Human Services created this child care crisis and you are the only ones who can fix it.

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