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My name is Susan Tripp. I am a state licensed childcare provider and have run a family child care out of my home for over 37 years. I have successfully cared for almost 300 children from my community in that time, without controversy or complaint.

What was a rewarding small cottage industry when I opened my business, has evolved into a heavily regulated, overly documented beast of a livelihood that requires continuing ongoing trainings, inspections and unrealistic expectations of a sole provider who is constantly being pulled away from the interactive relationships with the children in our care to meet these oversight demands all while making an insultingly low income for the services provided. The ever increasing demands on our time and attention take us away from providing the care that the children need and deserve. It is a career that has been underpaid, overlooked and taken for granted for decades.

Being a childcare provider is not a career for the faint of heart. Every single person, large or small, who walks through our doors wants something from us. Paid time off? Vacations? Sick days? Retirement? Tips or bonuses? Dream on. Long, demanding days working 50+ hours a week, with weekends spent on cleaning, property maintenance, shopping and restocking leaves little time for our own families or personal downtime.

It wasn't until the pandemic struck that suddenly childcare was recognized as an essential service (finally), and began to be appreciated and supported for the community support it provides after years of neglectful oversight. It finally dawned on our societal leadership that childcare was a necessary, foundational support of local, state and national economies. Without childcare, the workforce would be severely restricted, services would suffer, and communities damaged.

And now, I see there are efforts being made to renege on the promises and support recently put into law for providers, not only to maintain the current workforce, but to hopefully attract new providers in order to help alleviate the pathetic lack of care currently available. It's almost as if some short-sighted folks are trying to undermine this vulnerable yet essential service by providing the death knell to quality care for our society's most beloved individuals-our CHILDREN.

Childcare providers give their best to the children in their care, the families who trust us with that care, and to the communities where we live. Because of us children, families and communities can thrive. Without us, children, families and communities suffer.

The current efforts to undermine us will have devastating consequences. I think it is time to lead, follow or get out of the way of supporting a necessary industry that keeps working families functioning, producing, and contributing to our communities at large. I wish I could put some of you in an extended time-out to give you time to re-think these choices. Thank you for listening.