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November 11, 2008

Obama Team  
c/o Senator Barack Obama  
*President Elect Obama*

Dear Obama Team;

As you work to expand affordable and free child care options for parents, please be really careful that you do not accidentally drive existing home-based ***Family Child Care Homes*** out of business.

The last time well-meaning child care advocates tried to expand child care, they inadvertently put approximately 23 black, North Minneapolis, family child care providers out of business, hurting many children and taking away the main source of income for those black families.

The federal government built the huge Hubert H. Humphry child care center, offering *free* child care. The result was at least 23 existing black businesses, offering child care for a *low* weekly rate, were soon gone. These neighborhood businesses offered small, home-based, highly personal child care to a mix of families. They particularly featured many “unofficial” and “semi-official” under-employed black men and teenagers as handi-men, helpers, and part-time assistants.

This informal involvement of black men and teens in the care of babies and young children was especially valuable. Also, the entrepreneurial nature of the homes run by these black business women was an inspiration. This was great stuff, among the best things happening on our mostly black and immigrant North Side.

The government accidentally killed these child care homes, by opening a huge, **free**, all-concrete, ugly, noisy child care center which had no teens and no black fathers as workers or helpers. (This happened all across the nation, again & again.)

When the time was ripe for government to “support” child care, the well organized child care centers and child care institutions were far more effective at lobbying than were the small, non-organized child care homes. Please do not let this happen again! Please find and give equal help to family child care homes.



## Best ways to help Family Child Care Homes:

**1. Increase the reimbursement rate for the USDA Child & Adult Care Food Program.** The Food Program reaches all forms of licensed child care equally. The Food Program has proven to improve child nutrition, at all income levels, and for all ethnic backgrounds.

Eliminate the means test for the USDA Child Care Food Program, as implementing the means test costs more than just giving the same reimbursement rate to everyone. Besides, even child care providers who serve well-off families, are themselves poorly paid, and need the Food Program money to offer high quality child care and stay in business.

## 2. Offer *SMALL GRANTS* to Family Child Care Homes:

Start-up Grants, under \$1,000.00, to help buy a fence, cribs, fire extinguisher, smoke detectors, the first year of child care insurance, high chairs, play equipment.

Yearly small grants, under \$500, to encourage the child care provider to stay in business, to buy toys, supplies, a new computer, replace a printer, repair a toilet.

The grants must be *small*, to encourage the child care homes to remain independent and self-sufficient. Many years ago, when large federal grants became available to family child care homes and day care centers, I remember how the grant process dominated the political and social atmosphere.

Because of the thousands of dollars available from a single child care grant, the public allocation meetings were intense and troubled. We saw many examples of intimidation and fraud. I observed people being threatened, involvement of drug dealers, even guns being brought to so-called public meetings.

So, if you do bring back federal grants for child care, an action I would cautiously favor, I strongly recommend *small* grants, available with minimal bureaucracy, on a yearly basis.

Warmest regards, and best wishes for success;  
Michael T. Kauper, FCC



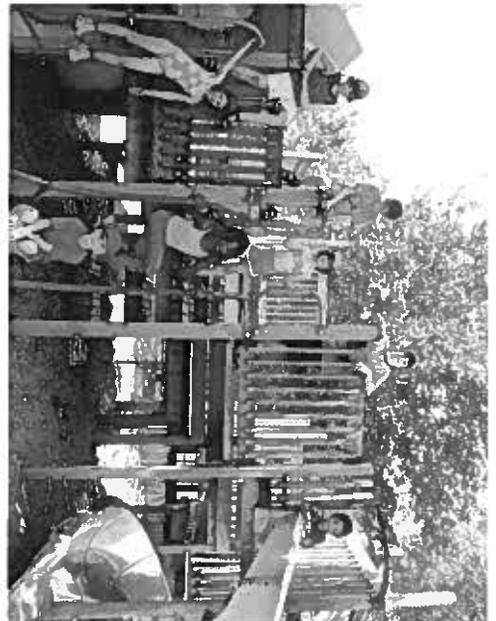
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Warm regards, best wishes,  
Michael T. Kauger, FCC

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