



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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September 16, 2005

Robin Arnold-Williams
Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services
P.O. Box 45010
Olympia, WA 98504-5010

Dear Robin:

Early childhood learning is a critical focus of my administration and an integral part of Washington Learns, our comprehensive review of Washington's education system. Research tells us that early experiences are central to children's emotional, social, physical and cognitive development. There is a clear and compelling connection between the quality of children's early care and education experiences and later success in school and life. It is my goal that the state agencies that are charged with the regulation of child care put child care into the context of early learning, and that these agencies work with child care providers to enhance the early learning and development of children in care.

The Early Learning Council (Council), one of the three Washington Learns advisory groups, will be making recommendations on many issues related to child care, including mechanisms to provide a stable and sustainable funding system, and regulation of child care to improve the quality of early childhood experiences. These are also issues of critical concern to family child care providers.

I have met with family child care providers many times and understand they are currently troubled by low reimbursement rates, diminishing number of providers, regulatory demands, and the need for provider input in creating regulations and licensing procedures. It is essential to have a forum where these issues can be discussed and providers can have a meaningful role in resolving these problems.

Therefore, I am directing DSHS to define a process for family child care providers, both licensed and exempt, to have a strong, ongoing voice in addressing these critical issues.

As part of the process defined by DSHS, family child care providers shall be given the opportunity to select a representative for negotiations on their behalf with DSHS. If they do select or identify a representative to carry forward their positions, DSHS should meet with that representative to discuss reimbursement rates, regulation and licensing procedures, and other related issues, and strive to arrive at a mutually agreeable resolution. Part of the responsibilities

Robin Arnold-Williams
September 16, 2005
Page 2

of the representative will be to communicate the information, concerns, and recommendations presented from family care providers to the Council.

I am requesting that the agency report back to me by October 10 on its progress on this issue, and that the process for involving providers in discussions with the agency be established no later than November 1, 2005. I appreciate your efforts on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor