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Sent: Friday, 17 June 2005 1:40 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Comments on Childcare

I would like to offer a few comments on Balancing Work and Family:

1. Childcare Conditions

Children are the most important resource in our community. They are our future society, and its quality depends on what we give to our children now. If we can give them loving support and opportunities for learning, there will be less crime problems in the future and we will have a society of capable, well-adjusted and well-educated people.

Childcare facilities need to be able to offer a high level of care which includes compassionate relationships between children and their carers as well as excellent learning opportunities - activities which will interest and motivate them. Childcare workers are not paid appropriately to the value of the work they do, and parents cannot afford to pay more childcare fees. There needs to be a much higher priority given to training and attracting excellent childcare workers who will enjoy their job at well-deserved rates of pay. Happy childcare workers will make for happier children. Workers who experience good conditions of work will be more likely to stay in that position, which will facilitate better quality relationships between carers and children. But parents cannot be expected to foot this bill alone. Children will benefit the whole of society - even the childless - and everyone needs to contribute to our society's future.

Parents need to feel confident that their children are being looked after and given positive experiences, in order to face their own work with a clear head. It is stressful enough for parents who work to get children ready and delivered to childcare, without the added burden of feeling guilty that their children are suffering in any way. The stress of trying to make ends meet financially and emotionally is an important factor in the emotional health of many families. This stress can contribute to child abuse and parents need support in the enormous task of bringing up their children. Having decent and affordable childcare is just one factor, but probably the most important in helping out families.

2. Part Time Work

Parents should be able to work part-time to better balance the responsibilities they have with their children. They need flexible work hours, and should not be made to feel guilty for needing time off to look after sick children. The whole social attitude towards workers with families needs to be changed from seeing them as being slack and unreliable and a financial burden on employers to a supportive environment where they are commended for taking care of the family.

In these times where parents are parenting without the support of extended families, there needs to be a new culture that actually nurtures families to help them in their task of building a better society for the future.

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