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January 15, 2025

Rep. Liz Berry, Chair
Rep. Suzanne Schmidt, Ranking Member
House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

RE: **Testimony on HB 1128 - Establishing a child care workforce standards board.**

Chair Berry and members of the House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee:

Thank you for accepting this written testimony in addition to my abbreviated comments made during today's hearing.

NFIB is the state's leading advocacy organization representing small, independent business owners. We have more than 6,500 members statewide.

While we agree there are many challenges in the childcare sector, **we must oppose HB 1128**, which we believe would take our state in exactly the wrong direction.

Childcare costs are too high. Choices are too few. Availability is too limited. Wait times are too long. More providers and childcare workers are needed to address these concerns. A thorough review of childcare regulations and restrictions is also essential to making real progress that benefits Washington's working families.

Sadly, instead of removing regulatory barriers that limit providers and drive-up costs, HB 1128 would increase them. It would establish an **unelected, unaccountable board** composed primarily of three employer and three labor representatives, along with four other members, all **appointed by the governor**.

The bill would **cede authority** for wage and hour levels, benefit requirements, workplace standards, safety and health regulations, and worker training requirements to this board that are **properly the purview of the Legislature and the people**. It appears the board would have the power to supersede state statutes, rules, and the stated will of voters, including that expressed through Initiative 1433.

It is telling that HB 1128 makes no provision for a small employer seat on the board. In fact, the bill is an **open invitation for a few large employers** to collude with labor to establish wage, benefit, training, staffing, equipping, and other workplace requirements that only they could meet. This threatens **to drive small, independent providers out of business**, which would further reduce the choices and number of slots available to working families while also raising their prices for this essential service.

Increasing subsidies to offset these substantial price hikes is highly questionable given our current budget situation.

Instead of empowering parents, incentivizing providers to establish or expand operations here, or addressing excessive regulatory burdens or other cost drivers, this bill will make childcare less affordable, accessible, and available in Washington state.

For these reasons, **NFIB urges you to reject HB 1128** and not advance it from committee.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patrick L. Connor" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick Connor

Washington State Director