



## Capitol Connection

*CCR&Rs' weekly source for federal child care policy news.*

**June 09, 2011**

### **\*\*BREAKING NEWS\*\***

#### **Linda Smith Testifies Before Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families Subcommittee Chairwoman Mikulski (D-MD) Cosponsors Background Check Bill!!**

Exciting news! Today is a big day at NACCRRA and for families with children in child care -- we couldn't wait to share it with you!

First, this morning, Executive Director, Linda Smith, testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families, "Getting the Most Bang for the Buck: Quality Early Education and Care" on the critical importance of investing in children at a young age. Linda discussed the need to improve the quality of early learning and child care programs, the differences in the Military Child Care Act and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and presented the Subcommittee with specific recommendations:

- **Recommendation One:** Stop treating care and education as separate issues.
- **Recommendation Two:** Define child care for which public funds can be used. Anyone providing care to a child not related to themselves on a regular basis for a fee is in business and should be trained, background checked, meet basic health and safety requirements, and be inspected.
- **Recommendation Three:** Require background checks for child care providers. Congress required this of the Department of Defense in 1990.
- **Recommendation Four:** Require a core set of health and safety protections for children and require accountability.
- **Recommendation Five:** Public funds should support parent choice, but only among programs that meet a basic quality threshold. For many parents, their choices are limited to "affordable care" which often means unlicensed, low quality care.

Also testifying before the Subcommittee were:

Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children & Families, HHS

Dennis Hillian, Family Service Coordinator, the Charles County Judy Center, Waldorf, Maryland

Arthur Rolnick, Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the University of Minnesota

Eva Tansky Blum, Senior Vice President and Director of Community Affairs, PNC Bank, Pittsburgh, PA

Charlie Mills, III, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Salera Capital Management, Potomac Falls, VA

All testimony as well as a video of today's hearing are posted on the Committee's website at: <http://help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=4fd57df5-5056-9502-5d58-05502741ee44>.

The subcommittee heard testimony about the need to improve the quality of care as well as the long-term economic benefits of investing in early childhood. There was much discussion and an opportunity to exchange ideas with Committee members. Chairwoman Mikulski told the packed hearing room that after the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, she hoped to have a hearing on background checks. She also discussed potentially holding a hearing to further explore and define "quality child care." Senator Burr told the audience we owe it to working parents to ensure a safe and healthy environment for children.

At the end of the hearing, Chairwoman Mikulski concluded that there is inconsistency in the quality of care when comparing military to civilian child care and that we ought to take a look at the requirements under the Military Child Care Act in setting the framework for reauthorization of CCDBG.

Wow! We are very excited to be working with the Subcommittee to strengthen child care. Hopefully, this is the year for CCDBG reauthorization!

### **Background Checks:**

On a related note, we're thrilled to announce that Subcommittee Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) has cosponsored, Senator Burr's [Child Care Protection Act \(S. 581\)](#)!!! This is fantastic! We now have the Subcommittee Chairwoman and the Ranking Member on the bill, but more still needs to be done. Go to NACCRRRA's "[Take Action!](#)" area on our website to send a letter via email to your Senator asking him/her to cosponsor S. 581 - let them know that the Chairwoman is on the bill. Every cosponsor is important! [Click here](#) to send your email today!

It's a great day at NACCRRRA and for the child care world!