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Henry McMasters
P.O. Box 142
Columbia SC 29202

Dear Lieutenant Governor McMasters,

I am writing to request that you will investigate a specific situation between a Greenville at-home daycare provider and DSS, as well as the broader situation of DSS's poor management of at-home daycares in general.

At-home daycares are an important part of childcare across the state yet they are poorly monitored and regulated, resulting in bad ones that stay open and good ones that get shut down. I know this first hand. In my 7 years as a working mother I have seen the good and the bad of child-care. I could tell several scary stories but I will try to stick to the point. Right now my children are in a great situation, but DSS is fighting to close it forever.

They stay with a very sweet lady, who has kept children in her home for over 30 years with no parent complaints or DSS violation until 2014. Her name is Beth Gates, my children call her "Mama Beth". I am very passionate about this situation and have started a "Go Fund Me" campaign for this sweet lady. I have included a print out of my Go Fund Me page for you to review her story. I am not writing because I hope you will give a donation to the cause, but because I hope you will further investigate her story and the larger story of the systems, or lack there of, DSS has in place for managing these at home daycares.

I feel DSS has failed my children and many others with their sloppy, disorganized handling of at-home daycares. Beth Gates is an amazing child-care provider. This would be evident after one visit with her in her home. She is passionate about what she does and truly enjoys her work. I am certain that she would be glad to tell you all about her story and even show you her home/daycare if you asked.

Thank you for all you do to serve our state.

Sincerely,

Patricia Kotula Stewart

Mama Beth's fight for her Daycare



Beth Gates(Mama Beth) has run an at home daycare for 35 years with no complaints or violations and now South Carolina Department of Social Services has shut her down over paperwork issues. She did not renew her registration on time, which left her unregistered when they did a visit. However, on the day they shut her down, her name and registration # were on their website and she was listed as being up to date on all her paperwork and listed as having no complaints. Nonetheless, they shut her down and told her to enroll in their daycare training/orientation courses(as if she had never had a daycare before), and reapply for her license. After participating in the training and completing all the paperwork, they denied her application and refused to give her a license.

It is our belief that DSS was on a hunt to close several at home daycares to "prove" to the media/public that they were in fact a functioning entity. In the weeks prior to them visiting Beth's house an infant died in an at home daycare with a long list of violations. DSS was highly criticized by the media for having allowed that particular daycare to stay open, despite its previous violations. DSS has had many problems within their agency in the past several years. Their director was forced to resign in June of 2014. December 2014 Senator Katrina Shealy introduced a bill to dismantle DSS and start over.

When DSS ordered Beth to shut down immediately it left all her families scrambling to find new daycares in the middle of the year. For me this meant taking sick days at work, to cart my three children around town looking for a new daycare. This experience, and the months away from her to follow, was traumatic for all involved. Everyone affected by this felt DSS handled the situation in the worst way possible.

The families who used Mama Beth's daycare urged her to sue DSS to get her license back, which she ultimately decided to do. A judge has ordered DSS to allow her to stay open throughout the course of the suit, so our children are happily back at her home. However, this has turned into a much bigger legal battle than anticipated and she has incurred over \$34,000 in legal fees. It is difficult to sue a state agency when they have endless tax dollars to use in their defense. We want her to be able to continue to fight for her career and for the children of Greenville who love her and need her.

Beth Gates is one of the kindest, most generous, sweetest people you will ever meet. She loves each of her "children" as if they were her own. Beth is a native of Greenville, SC. She was an orphan after her father died in WWII and raised by her grandparents. As a teenager she spent much of her time at a friends house who had 12 siblings. Beth loved being in a household with many children and dreamed of having many children of her own. Shortly after marrying her husband Clint she needed an emergency hysterectomy. Unable to bear biological children, her and Clint adopted their daughter Amy. Beth left her career as an accountant to stay home with her daughter and several years later started her at home daycare. She has been keeping children in her home ever since.

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