

Elly Lafkin
Child Care Provider Background Checks to Promote Child Safety
Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions
Subcommittee #2
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Good morning. My name is Elly Lafkin and I am speaking on behalf of myself and my husband, Cameron. I want to thank Delegate Filler-Corn, Delegate Anderson, Delegate Peace as well as Senator Hanger for introducing legislation to ensure that children are safe in child care.

The reality is that working parents need child care. We depend on it so that we can provide for our families. Many states require child care providers to get a fingerprint background check, but Virginia is not among them. In Virginia, only a name check is required. And, only Virginia state records are checked, not a check against FBI records, which include the records from all states.

In December, Cameron and I were blessed with a baby girl, Caliann. She is happy and healthy and we cherish her every day. Sadly, Caliann will never know her sister Cami. Our first born, Camden, who we called Cami, died at 12 weeks old in a family child care home. When the police investigated, they conducted a fingerprint check and found that our provider had several aliases and a history of criminal offenses. If we had known that, we never would have selected her.

Many times, choosing a child care provider is a gut feeling for parents. You visit the program, you talk to people who may have used that provider, and you look around. But, unless a fingerprint check is required, there is no way for parents to know if their provider has had a criminal past. That's not right. A background check should be effective.

For Cami, there is no second chance. For Caliann, I'm hoping for better. By creating a task force to review how Virginia can implement a fingerprint check system, we will be on a path to ensure that all children are safe in child care. That's the right road for Virginia.

I look forward to working with you. And, I appreciate your efforts on behalf of young children.