

Sharon Veatch
Executive Director, Child Care Aware of Virginia
Child Care Provider Background Checks to Promote Child Safety
House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions
House Room D, General Assembly Building

Good morning. My name is Sharon Veatch and I am the Executive Director of Child Care Aware of Virginia. Our agencies are located throughout Virginia to help parents find child care and to strengthen the child care workforce through training and technical assistance.

First, I want to thank Delegate Anderson, Delegate Filler-Corn, Delegate Peace and Senator Hanger for introducing legislation to promote the safety of children in child care.

In Virginia, there are nearly 390,000 children younger than age 6 whose parents work every week, whose parents may have child care or who may be looking for child care. There are nearly 46,000 children under age 6 whose parents are active duty military, 6,000 children under age 6 whose parents are in the Guard or Reserve. If these parents are lucky enough to find on-base care, the military requires a background check using fingerprints. But, if they use off-base care, the background check is only as good as the state requires. In Virginia, that's just a name check.

What we know from national polling is that parents assume that a background check is conducted before someone can work in a child care program or operate one from their home. What they don't know is that in our state, it's only a name check.

The states around us require a fingerprint check -- Maryland, DC, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Only Kentucky stands out, like Virginia, where no such check is required.

A task force to review the most effective way to implement a fingerprint check system is the first step to ensure that our children are safe in child care. My granddaughter just turned one. I know how hard it was for my daughter to find child care and to trust that it was ok to leave her baby. A fingerprint check is just more trustworthy than a name check. And child care is about trust.

Let's work together to make sure all children are safe in child care.