

Baxter, Tamara

From: wrenznest@gmail.com
Sent: Friday, May 13, 2022 2:30 PM
To: Baxter, Tamara
Cc: annamariearlene@yahoo.com
Subject: Zoning Variance Support for Anna Johnson Project CPC CU 21-00196

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Hello,

I am writing this email in support of the application for a zoning variance for the project for the enlargement of the license capacity in a home daycare for Anna Johnson. Over the last two years, I have gotten to know Anna pretty well, and she is a hard-working, kind woman who takes her job as an Early Childhood Care Professional very seriously. She is a conscientious, caring woman who takes excellent care of the children entrusted to her. When she decided to look into expanding her capacity, she looked into it both cautiously and with careful consideration.

Unbeknownst to many working professionals in this city, there has been an ongoing childcare crisis in our community. Parents spend the better part of a year on several waitlists, especially if they have children under the age of 2 years old, because there are simply not enough childcare openings to support the size of the population of El Paso County. To make matters worse, each licensed home can only have two children under the age of 2 years, without a specialty license that will allow them 3. Centers are facing the same problems as they can usually only have 5 to 6 infants per infant room. Compounding this problem, was the 2020 Pandemic, which sent the workforce home for the better part of two years and created a massive "Baby Boom." Now our community has (for lack of a better phrase) a huge influx of "Covid Babies." The problem is, that also caused by the Pandemic, our Early Childhood Workforce shrunk by nearly 40%. This has exacerbated the childcare crisis to such an overwhelming extent, that Bills are being written and rushed through Congress, long-standing age limit rules are being forced to be overturned, large grants are being written and offered to entice people and new centers to the workforce, and the so-called Universal Pre-K, is said to be short at least 5,700 workers.

Parents call each licensed childcare home and find there are no openings in most of them. They call crying, begging, pleading for an answer, because they need to work- but they cannot keep a job when they do not have reliable fulltime childcare. This causes another crisis in our community---parents being forced into unlicensed and unregulated childcare. Babies die of SIDS at an alarming rate in unregulated care. These children are also often neglected, abused and sometimes fall into the hands of predators posing as caring people who aren't background checked, inspected, or have any formal training in the care of our most precious tiny humans. Simply put, a large percentage of unlicensed care is unsafe. However, El Paso County parents are being forced into using this option because there aren't enough licensed/zoned/regulated childcare homes, like Anna Johnson's.

Anna is asking for a variance to her home's current zoning so that she may open up 2 to 4 more spots for licensed and regulated care. She and her husband are background checked, she takes ongoing trainings, has unannounced annual inspections and spends a great deal of her income keeping her home and her home's safety up-to-date on the latest rules and regulations. In case you were wondering, those rulebooks are at least 425 pages of rules and regulations. It's a lot of time and expense to commit to offering licensed childcare, and people who choose to participate do so because they have the heart for the children of our community. Anna has also leveled up in our Colorado Shines Program. That means she has gone to additional lengths to strengthen her commitment to offering unbiased, well-rounded childcare to the entire community by ensuring that she has an added amount of diversity in her toys/music/science materials/books etc to enhance and strengthen the value of playtime for the children she cares for.

Many people hear the word “ Large Daycare Center” and they automatically assume it will be a 24/7 place of chaos, noise and disorderly conduct. Anna has no desire to work (or live!) in that sort of situation. She is already licensed for 8 children and is looking to increase her capacity by 25 to 33%. That is only up to 4 more children per day. She works a teacher-schedule and is closed in the summer. She also is only open appx 9 hrs per day for the 38 weeks she is open each year. While it may make recess on a warm day slightly more noisy, it may also help the children to have a few more kids to play with and solve mini-arguments amongst themselves because they can just move on to another friend to play with. I don't think the impact to her neighbors will be nearly as big as they seem to believe. She can stagger the arrivals and departures to cut down on the amount of people at her home at one time. She could provide an approximate recess schedule so her neighbors could shut their windows for a short time and not hear the children. She doesn't offer 24 hr care, night care or weekend care, or holiday care so those times will just be Anna's family.

I believe in the best interest of the children of our community, and in the best interest of parents of young children, Anna Johnson should be granted her request for the variance for the large childcare zoning.

Sincerely,
Sharon Wren
Early Childhood Professional