

Miss LaVerne Hewlett
Statement Before the Budget Committee
Hearing on the Challenges Facing Working Families in America

August 1, 2001

Good morning. My name is LaVerne Hewlett. I appreciate this chance to speak with you. I live in Emmitsburg, Maryland, which is in Frederick County in the northwest part of the state. I am a single parent of a one year old son, Kahlil. I also have two older children, 18 and 21, who are working and living on their own in Virginia.

Since September of 2000, I have worked in the kitchen and dining room of Mt. St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg. I work Sunday through Thursday, 11am to 8:30 pm and earn \$7 an hour. I received cash assistance benefits from Maryland between May and September of last year while I was pregnant and shortly after the birth of my son. So far, I haven't gotten any child support from my son's father.

In order to work I have to pay for child care. The cost of child care for my son is my largest monthly expense. I pay \$500 per month for child care -- \$400 for the sitter who watches Kahlil Monday through Thursday and \$100 for the sitter who watches him on Sunday. It is very hard to find a babysitter to watch Kahlil on Sunday -- most babysitters are only available Monday through Friday.

I don't get a child care subsidy because neither of my child care providers is licensed by the state. There are no licensed providers available in my area. Licensed day care providers who work out of their home have a six to twelve month waiting list and the only child care center in my community has a two year waiting list. I used to get a \$100 per month subsidy from the state to cover the costs of child care on Sundays because I used to have a weekend babysitter who was licensed. She stopped offering weekend care and the new sitter is not licensed, so I lost that subsidy.

I appreciated the subsidy that I got for my weekend care -- it really helped. When people leave government assistance and get a job, a child care subsidy can make a big difference, but when there are too few licensed providers many parents like me have to go without the subsidy. Something needs to be done to increase the number of licensed providers including providing more financial support and training to people who want to be family day care providers.

I have been more fortunate with my rent. I am in public housing through the Section 8 housing program and pay \$223 per month for rent. Without the Section 8 program, my apartment would cost \$528 per month. With the child care expenses I have, I could not make ends meet on my earnings if I had to pay that full rent. I feel badly for other parents I know in this community who are paying much higher rents because the waiting list for Section 8 is also very long. Many landlords are reluctant to rent to lower-income parents who don't have a Section 8 voucher because they are worried the rent won't be paid. Other landlords refuse to accept the vouchers.

When my son is two or three years older, I would like to move to the city of Frederick, where

child care facilities and public transportation are more available. I think I could get a job there and I would like to continue my education in the area of geriatric care. But the cost of housing could be a big barrier in my being able to make that move. I hope that the programs that provide child care subsidies, housing assistance and other programs to support working families not only continue, but expand to help the many working parents out there like myself. Thank you for the opportunity to share this with you today.