

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing to express my family's strong support for the West End Learning Community's special use permit application. We live on the West Side of Providence and work in downtown Providence - I'm an architect and my wife is (the newest!) librarian at the Rhode Island School of Design. Part of the reason we moved to Providence eight years ago is because it was a beautiful and walkable city that was affordable enough that an entry level architect could live within walking distance of downtown. We have continued to shape our lives such that our daily needs can be met without relying on a car. Providence is one of the few places in the US that this option is feasible, and it has worked well for us until it came to childcare.

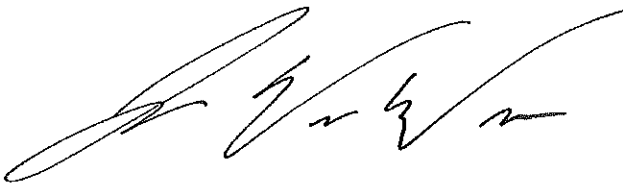
The childcare crisis has been widely reported on, but we didn't think much of it until we had our own kid. Three months before Bertie was born we started reaching out to daycares throughout Providence and its suburbs - we were told it would be difficult, so best to get an early start. All eight daycares we reached out to/toured had a waitlist - which we expected - but what we didn't expect is that the waitlists were three to 15 months long. Amy's maternity leave from the Community Libraries of Providence preserved her job for three months, so we rushed to complete the daycare applications to secure a daycare spot for our unborn child before Amy's maternity leave ran out.

We were fortunate to have that more-generous-than-most-but-still-too-short maternity leave, and fortunate that we had family that was able to drop everything and come live with us in the fourth month of Bertie's life so we could figure out what to do next while Amy went back to work. Most people do not have those options. Amy ended up leaving a good job at the libraries in large part because we couldn't find a satisfying solution to the daycare problem. The options available to us didn't have a slot, were too expensive, too far away, or had schedules that didn't work with our professional obligations.

What a relief it was to find out that Molly Abernathy was opening a home daycare in our neighborhood! Amy had met Molly when she was a teacher at Highlander Charter School and brought her students to the South Providence Library where Amy was the Manager. We reconnected as our daughters toddled around each other at the Dexter Field playground.

It is extremely difficult to find good daycare in Providence. The unfortunate truth is that many of our peers in this neighborhood (those that don't leave the workforce altogether) drive to Cranston or East Providence for daycare, and we feel extremely lucky that we have found a daycare option that we love in our neighborhood, and think that option should be available to more families.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel VanderWeele', written in a cursive style.

Joel (on behalf of Amy & Bertie) VanderWeele

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Erin Whorowski and I am a Providence resident - Pat and I bought our first home in October 2020, during the height of the pandemic, and moved with our four month old son to Federal Hill. We have always been active members of the communities we've lived in and we were so lucky to land here, on the West Side of Providence, where we are surrounded by an extremely vibrant small business community and endless ways to get involved.

During my family leave with my first son, Bray, I researched childcare options in Providence from our apartment in Western Massachusetts. It was overwhelming. We couldn't be there in person due to the distance and COVID restrictions. Pat and I both had to return to work full time, so we wound up enrolling our son in a daycare in North Providence - the only one in our price range with an opening. We pulled Bray out of that daycare as soon as a spot opened up at another one on our list, in January of 2021, because our daycare at the time was unable to follow COVID guidelines (i.e., teachers were not wearing masks consistently, as evidenced by pictures on our mobile app).

Bray's current daycare is good. The toddler room staff are professional, loving, and we feel that Bray is safe and cared for there. However, this year, we welcomed another child into the family - Derry - and we were hesitant to send him to Bray's daycare. The infant room staff had turned-over and the room seemed even more chaotic than one might expect with a bunch of babies in it.

Our friends with a one year old who had never sent their daughter to daycare due to the limited affordable, quality options in Providence told us about Molly, their neighbor, who planned to open a daycare nearby. They could not have been more excited and were finally ready to invest in childcare. We were fast to reach out to Molly to learn more; as soon as we met her we knew it was the right fit. Molly is a seasoned childcare professional and a Mom, she was organized and had all of the information we needed to make the decision, and she was setting up an open house in the coming weeks so we could see the space.

Derry has been enrolled in the West End Learning Community (WELC) for the past month. The space is stunning - it is bright and warm, thoughtful, has a separate quiet room for napping, and is filled with books and toys that keep the kids active and engaged all day. What we appreciate the most is the large outdoor space in the yard - with a huge, custom-built sandbox, a basketball hoop, and plenty of space for the children to get outside and reset.

With Derry attending a daycare that's located in the neighborhood, we have had the chance to form connections with other WELC families. We've been able to quickly grow a supportive network in Providence due to our relationship with Molly and WELC. This daycare is already an essential part of our community and has filled up fast. There is a major unmet demand for affordable, high quality childcare and I would urge you to approve increasing WELC's capacity from eight to 12 children. I have the utmost confidence that Molly and her team can maintain the deeply thoughtful level of service they are providing now, and it would address a major gap for families in our community.

Respectfully,



To Whom It May Concern:

I am a parent living in the West End. My husband and I have lived here for about ten years, and we now have a one-year old daughter. We are blessed to live in close proximity to Molly Abernathy's West End Learning Community (WELC). We send our daughter to "school" with Molly three days per week. As other parents in the program have echoed to us, we are so grateful for the nurturing and enriching environment she has cultivated for our kids.

Every parent and child who has met Molly knows how warm and kind she is. What not everyone may know is that she is also incredibly organized and truly gifted at running a daycare, both interpersonally (in the extraordinary level of care she offers our children and their families) and also in terms of how she runs her business. She is communicative, thoughtful, flexible, and genuinely interested in the wellbeing and growth of the kids. Her space is warm, engaging, and thoughtfully arranged, with lots of activities for the children to explore and room to run around (both inside and outside).

We have heard from other families about their challenges finding good childcare in Providence, which makes us all the more thankful to have found Molly at the right time while there was still space at WELC. I've told many other parents about Molly's program, and multiple folks have reached out to her in hopes of landing their child a spot in her program, which currently is full. I know she is more than capable of managing an expansion in the number of children, and am confident that if she needs additional support via staff, she will be able to find it.

I believe it is important that Molly be given the opportunity to expand the capacity of the program from 8 to 12 children, in order to meet the needs of our community.

Thank you,

Priscilla Weidlein

To Whom It May Concern,

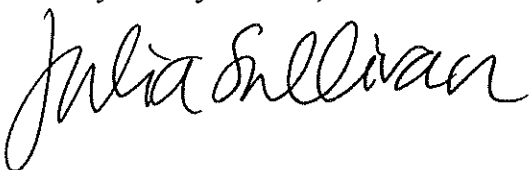
My name is Julia Sullivan, I am a providence resident, artist, small business owner and involved member of the community. I am also a new mother, my daughter is 11 months old. This past year has been the most wonderful of my life and the most challenging. My husband and I own a home and a rental property on the west side of Providence and I have a studio in Olneyville where I operate a small jewelry business. I have lived in Providence since 2006, and have been involved with many local organizations including As220, RISD, New Urban Arts, The Steel Yard, and volunteering for meals on wheels. I care deeply about my community, my personal life and business are centered around it. I have invested and committed myself completely in supporting local businesses and doing what I can to help Providence remain a special place.

I met Molly Abernathy from West End Learning Community at our local playground and jumped at the opportunity to enroll my daughter in her new program. I had been talking to another small local program that had just been shut down because of issues with the cost of renting a space in our neighborhood. I had been searching fruitlessly for childcare and was feeling overwhelmed with motherhood, a small business and managing a rental property while my husband worked long hours.

Currently my daughter is enrolled at West End Learning Community and she loves it. Molly is wonderful and the community she is creating there is very special. The space is clean, safe and appropriate for the age range enrolled there. I am sent photos of a happy girl throughout the day playing with her friends. I know that it is an experience that inspires her and expands her world.

West End Learning Community is an example of exactly what our community needs to thrive. It is affordable, close to home and run by a qualified, responsible person who clearly enjoys it. As a parent I could ask for nothing more. I strongly believe that access to programs like this should be available to every family and I wonder why it is so hard to make that possible. I wholeheartedly support her request to increase the number of children at West End Learning Community.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Sullivan

December 15, 2022

From: Seth Zeren
31 Harrison Street
Providence, RI 02909

To: City of Providence
Zoning Board of Review
J. Dorley Municipal Building
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Molly Abernathy of 98 Harrison Street and her business, West End Learning Community LLC. I understand that she is applying for a special use permit to increase the number of children in her care from 9 to 12. I am certain that she has been inundated with demand for childcare services. Our children have recently begun school, but when they were younger we had to drive out of the city everyday to Cranston to find a daycare with space for our two kids. As a resident, neighbor, and parent, I support the additional availability of quality child care in the community and the special use permit for 98 Harrison Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Seth Zeren".

Seth Zeren
31 Harrison Street

December[15], 2022

City of Providence
Zoning Board of Review
J. Dorley Municipal Building
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Molly Abernathy of 98 Harrison Street, doing business as West End Learning Community LLC, as she applies for a special use permit to increase the number of children in her care from 9 to 12. As a resident of the neighborhood, I support the additional availability of quality child care in the community.

Sincerely,

Obed Papp

Printed Name

Obed Papp

Signature

88 Dexter, Providence, RI 02909

Address

Address