



Belle Colassaco | Virginia



Belle's story

Belle Colassaco's life changed in October 2006 when her fifteen-month-old son Noah died suddenly while in child care. He'd only been there for three weeks. The provider placed a 32 pound metal dog crate on top of his portable crib. Noah stood up and poked his head through a small opening between the crib railing and crate where his airway was compromised when his neck became pinched. He had asphyxiated by the time the provider returned to check on him three hours later. The provider was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 5 years in jail, with 4 suspended.

Belle believes strongly that working families are a necessity; therefore, parents need access to safe and affordable child care. Specifically, she would like to see Virginia increase minimum qualifications needed in order to become a child care provider. Furthermore, Belle wants to ensure that all child care settings in Virginia are licensed and inspected frequently and that child care providers are required to engage in professional development related to the care, health and safety of infants and toddlers.

Child Care Stats in VA
The cost of center care for 2 children in Virginia is nearly twice the annual cost of tuition at a four year college.

U.S. businesses lose approximately \$4.4 billion annually due to employee absenteeism as the result of child care breakdowns.

There are 393,407 children under the age of 6 in Virginia who could be in need of child care.

Congressional Request: 2017

CCAOA is requesting a \$1.4 billion increase (over the FY 2016 level) for next year to ensure that nearly 217,000 children and families don't lose access to care, and also to help states meet the requirements of the 2014 CCDBG law.

We ask that you co-sponsor the "Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act of 2017" (H.R. 947/S.337), which would:

- Provide up to 12 weeks of leave for working families
- Enable workers to earn up to 66% of their monthly income while on leave
- Cover workers in all companies, no matter size
- Be administered through the newly created Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave

We also ask that you co-sponsor the "Promoting Affordable Childcare for Everyone (PACE) Act of 2017," which would expand and enhance the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to reflect the realities of modern-day child care costs. The PACE Act would make CDCTC refundable and increase the credit rate, which would greatly benefit millions of working families struggling to pay their monthly bills as child care is the greatest expense after housing.