

Legislative and Regulations Update

By Tricia Sheldon

For the past several years our lobbyist and board members have tried to get a law passed to regulate after school and summer camp programs. We are finally making some progress and really need your help.

On March 28th, I was invited to testify at the Joint Citizen and Legislative Committee on Children to discuss the need to protect children in all forms of childcare and two bills currently working their way through the general assembly.

- House Bill 4044, sponsored by Representatives Smith, Erickson, White, Anthony, McEachern, Bannister and Bernstein
- Senate Bill 569 sponsored by Senator Katrina Shealy.

During my testimony I reviewed incidents that had occurred in unregulated programs that had been in the news. These included the Citadel Sex Abuse scandal; a child that drowned at a Union County Housing Authority's summer camp at the YMCA; and two children who were beaten with a belt at their after school programs (one in Goose Creek and one in Columbia).

I also challenged the Department of Social Services fiscal impact study that estimated the cost to regulate these programs to be at least \$4.2 Million Dollars. As a result of this a true dialog started and hopefully the new fiscal impact study will reflect a much more manageable \$ amount.

On March 30th, I testified at the Senate Subcommittee in support of S569. Also speaking in support of the bill were:

- Carter Clark, Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands
- Naomi Torfin, United Way
- Karen Wingo, Department of Social Services

This was a huge win for us. The only person to testify in opposition of the bill was Mr. Edward Earwood from the South Carolina Association of Christian Schools. That doesn't mean there is not still opposition from other groups, but we have made real progress and have formed relationships with other groups who see the real need in oversight, even if there is a monetary cost to them.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! We have made great progress this year, but there are only a few days left in this year's session. We are pressing for a vote in the Senate before the session ends – but we must be prepared in January when the second year of the legislative session begins.

In regards to regulations, the **Proposed Public and Private Child Care Center Regulations** have been submitted for publication in the State Register on April 28, 2017. [Click here](#) to review the proposed regulations.

A hearing before the administrative law court is scheduled for May 31st. If approved they will be submitted to the general assembly for adoption in January 2018.

Also, although regulations will not be changed until next year, we were able to freeze the ratios at the current levels for one more year though a budget proviso.

As the voice for the importance of children having more options of licensed child care and for providing parents with greater confidence and recourse if a problem arises, it is critical that SCAECE remain a vocal advocate for children. All of the above pending issues are critical to your ongoing business and need your participation both financially and vocally. In addition there is some early work being done on a possible tax credit for facilities hosting school readiness programs. The general assembly can't act if they are not made aware of the need for change. Joining and participating in SCAECE initiatives is your avenue to having a voice.

If you have not renewed your membership in SCAECE, please do so NOW. If you renew now, you will receive 16 months for the price of 12! If you are a current member, please chip in to our legislative fund! A donation of \$50 or \$100 will go a LONG way to helping us achieve our goal of protecting all children and leveling the playing field.