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Testimony submitted to the House Labor and Commerce Committee  
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"Families come to Help Me Grow Alaska for a multitude of needs—mental health concerns, medical conditions, speech supports, and developmental delays are just a handful of the issues facing our families when they cross our paths. For all of these families, child care looms in the background. Working families are struggling to meet the demands of their employers while trying to prioritize their children's medical and mental health. For families with multiple children, adding a layer of limited child care resources makes an already complicated situation feel insurmountable. We partner closely with Thread to make sure families have the most up-to-date information on the child care landscape in their area and know that there simply are not enough high-quality child care options available for the children in our state. The impacts of this are far reaching and touch every aspect of family life. Personally, when I welcomed a baby in mid-2021 I had no idea how much the child care landscape had changed. My youngest was 6 when my baby was born and the daycare I had used for him was facing a 12-18 month waitlist for infants. Essentially, I would have had to get my baby on a waitlist before I was pregnant to be able to have him in services. As I researched other options I learned that longstanding, trusted daycares had closed due to lack of workforce, certainly not lack of need and that families all over in the Mat-Su were struggling to return to work post-pandemic because they had nowhere to send their children. Ultimately I had to leave my job when my baby was six months old because there was nowhere for him to go and my company was unable to allow me to continue bringing him to work past the six month mark. While I was able to pivot and find remote work that allowed me to continue to care for my child while working, not all families have that flexibility—and even if they do, working from home with a toddler in the background is not for the faint of heart. Families should have options when considering who to entrust with their children. This is not a decision to be taken lightly and it's imperative that families be able to find high quality, safe and nurturing care for their children."