

Susana Coro
Senate HELP Subcommittee on Children & Families
CCDBG Reauthorization: Helping to Meet the Child Care Needs of American Families
July 26, 2012

Good morning. I want to thank the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee, Senator Mikulski, and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Senator Burr, for inviting me to testify today. I also want to thank the other members of the subcommittee for listening to my story.

My name is Susana Coro. I am married and we have two children, Max who is 7 years old and Yadida who is 4. For ten years, I was a nanny to a family with an autistic child. I've always been good with children and the family sent me to have extra training to work with children with special needs.

Over time when my son was a toddler, I came to think his speech was not right. I looked everywhere for a center, but I thought to myself, these were no places for my son. A friend told me about the Falls Church/McLean Children's Center. She told me it was a great program – accredited and 4 stars on Virginia's Quality Rating System. For months, I went there and asked about openings. I literally begged them to take my son.

Max was 3 when he started at the center. They helped me apply for child care assistance. They helped me contact the Infant & Toddler Connection program under ChildFind in Fairfax County. Max was screened and found eligible for speech services. The speech therapist came to the center and worked with Max. The teachers at the center worked with the speech therapist so they could better meet Max's needs as well. There are so many things that I like about the center.

- The staff are kind, professional, well-trained, and give good advice to parents
- There aren't too many kids in the classrooms and each room has three teachers
- The staff read to the children; there are lots of art projects, a block area, a sand table, a housekeeping area; the staff take the time to talk to each child, really connect with them.

At first, I was hired to work part-time in the center. When I was promoted to full-time, the county called me. They said I made too much money for subsidy. I didn't know what I was going to do. I didn't want to move my children to a different program, but even making more money, I could not afford the cost.

The Director of the program told me not to worry. The Center raised funds for special circumstances. She said they help families who lose their child care assistance, or who lose their jobs and need to look for a new one. She said if I could pay the \$800 that the monthly subsidy would have paid, the center would cover the rest. The rates are \$1,550 a month for two year olds, \$1,420 a month for preschool children. She told me of the 70 children at the center, 45 are on subsidy at \$800 a month and the center pays the difference.

My daughter, Yadida is 4. I know this is a quality program for her. We pay \$800 a month for her and also another \$325 for my son in SACC, the school-age child care program run by Fairfax County. If the center did not give me a discount, my daughter would not be here. It makes no sense that I could work in a program that I could not afford to send my children.

I know that the Fall Church/McLean Children's Center is a special place and that most child care centers cannot afford to subsidize the families who participate. I feel lucky and I know my center is unique in its ability to serve the community. I am thankful that they really helped my son. And, now my daughter is at the center and she is really happy. I am working toward my CDA. I know I will get it.

Getting a child care subsidy not only helped me get my children into a quality program, it really changed my life. Thank you.