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Iowa Child Care Providers Win with AFSCME

AFSCME/Child Care Providers Together is the new union for the state's 6,000 registered providers. Despite persistent opposition and interference from the Service Employees International Union, well over the required majority of providers signed cards authorizing Iowa Council 61 to represent them in contract negotiations.



"Having a union means we now have some say in child care issues," says Matt Tapscott, president of the Early Education Benefits Association of Des Moines. "We are elated because we've worked so hard to gain a standing in the formation and implementation of child care policy. We're no longer on the sidelines."

Following Gov. Tom Vilsack's (D) January executive order, which called for the state's Department of Human Services to confer with an authorized representative, Iowa's registered child care providers have worked to organize as a union. The order acknowledges the need for the state "to receive input from the child development home providers in order to improve the delivery of child care services." Provider Ylonda Shook spoke for all when she said, "For too long, registered child care providers haven't had a seat at the table. With AFSCME/CCPT, we can begin our campaign to improve our lives, conditions of work and the services we provide to the hard-working families we serve."

SEIU, which submitted far less than the required majority of cards, failed in its effort to derail CCPT's success. "SEIU did not have the support of child care providers, and yet it intervened and complicated matters," adds Tapscott. "We could have had AFSCME certified much earlier on, but SEIU dragged us through this process."

Declared Lee Saunders, executive assistant to President McEntee: "An overwhelming majority of providers chose AFSCME/CCPT because they know we're the best union for helping child care providers improve their work lives. It's time for SEIU to stand down."

AFSCME Council 61 represents 33,000 state and local Iowa public service employees. Nationwide, the International union represents more than 150,000 child care providers of all kinds – a larger number than any other union.