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November 27, 2006

Alvin C. Bush, Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
 333 Market Street, 14th Floor
 Harrisburg, PA 17101

**Re: Comments on Final Form DPW Child Care Subsidy Regulations
 at 55 Pa. Code Chapter 168
 Regulation #: 14-506 (#2549)**

Dear Members of the Independent Regulatory Review Commission:

These comments on the Department of Public Welfare's (DPW's) November 8, 2006 final form subsidized child care regulations at 55 Pa. Code Chapter 168 are submitted on behalf of the Pennsylvania Child Care Campaign (PaCCC). PaCCC is a coalition of low-income parents, child care providers, advocacy organizations, faith-based organizations, and others concerned about access to quality, affordable child care for low-income parents.

The regulations at Chapter 168 govern the provision of child care subsidies and services to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA), and food stamp families through DPW's County Assistance Offices (CAOs). They follow sweeping changes to the subsidized child care regulations at Chapter 3041 governing the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) program, which serves low-income, working families and former TANF families.

The proposed revisions to Chapter 168 generally align the policies in Chapter 168 with the improved policies at Chapter 3041. In so doing, they move the Department substantially closer to a single, unified child care subsidy program.

The Pa Child Care Campaign strongly supports the Department's final form regulations, as they represent a major step forward in child care program unification. The following is a summary of the most welcomed proposed program improvements, many of which have long been embraced by the Campaign. The proposed regulations:

- o Extend the vendor payment system to all child care providers, including unregulated providers (except in very limited situations¹).
- o Establish the CCIS payment system as the single payment system for all families², whether they are served through the CAO or the CCIS agency;

¹ The two exceptions are: (i) payments to in-home providers; and (ii) reimbursement to parents who have incurred child care costs during a retroactive period of eligibility.

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- o Adopt the "incapable of caring for himself" standard from the Chapter 3041 CCIS regulations to determine when a family may receive subsidy for a child over 12, but under 19 years of age³;

We are pleased that the Department also addressed in the final form regulations a number of concerns with the proposed regulations raised by PACCC. Changes to address these concerns include:

- o Deleting the definition of "parent."
- o Deleting the requirement for pre-expenditure approval.

The Pennsylvania Child Care Campaign believes that this is a strong regulatory package, which will improve the delivery of quality child care services to needy families. We urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission to approve DPW's November 8, 2006 final form child care subsidy regulations at 55 Pa. Chapter 168.

Pennsylvania Child Care Campaign

ABC Learning Academy, Associated Day Care Services, Inc., Community Justice Project, Episcopal Community Services (Rev. John E. Midwood), For Love of Children Advocacy Group, Housing Association of Delaware Valley, Maternity Care Coalition, Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Montgomery County Child Care Consortium, Montgomery Early Learning Centers, Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, Neighborhood Interfaith Movement, Pathways PA, Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA), People's Emergency Center (Gloria M. Guard, President), Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, Success Against All Odds, Sunshine and Rainbows Day Care Center, United for Children, United Way of Berks County, United Way of Lancaster County Success by Six, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (David R. Fair, Vice President for Community Impact), Women's Law Project

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c.c. Robert Frein, Director
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² The CCIS payment system has long been considered by parents and providers to be superior to the CAO payment system.

³ The current policy, which relies upon determining the developmental age of the child, has proven unworkable.