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**Subject:** Fire code proposed changes affecting Child Care  
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Dear Members of the Commission,

My name is Alexandra Dutton, and I am the program director of a preschool in Lafayette, CA as well as a professor at Diablo Valley College in the Early Education Department. I am writing to share my concerns regarding the proposed fire code changes and their potential impact on the childcare sector. While safety is our shared priority, the current proposals present significant operational and financial hurdles that could threaten the stability of providers across the state. I hope to share these concerns in order to make sure safe, quality childcare can continue to exist in our community and provide a much-needed service to working families.

To ensure these codes are both effective and sustainable, I urge the Commission to consider the following during your deliberations:

### 1. Flexibility for Existing Buildings

Most licensed centers operate in leased or repurposed buildings that were not originally purpose-built for childcare. Retroactively applying new construction standards to these facilities is often physically and financially impossible.

**Our Ask:** Include "flexibility provisions" or "grandfathering" clauses for existing facilities. Compliance pathways must be realistic so that providers aren't forced to close due to impractical structural mandates.

### 2. Recognition of Existing Safety Practices

Childcare centers are already among the most strictly regulated environments in the state. Our low staff-to-child ratios and constant supervision provide a level of safety that should be accounted for in the fire code.

**Our Ask:** Recognize these rigorous licensing standards and allow providers to meet the intent of the code through **operational measures** rather than requiring structural changes that may not offer a meaningful safety benefit beyond what is already achieved through active supervision.

### 3. Funding Support for Compliance

Mandates without funding are a direct path to closure, particularly for small, community-based centers operating on razor-thin margins. The burden of state-level changes should not fall solely on the shoulders of individual providers.

**Our Ask:** If the Commission moves forward with these requirements, dedicated state funding must be part of the implementation. We must ensure that safety improvements do not come at the cost of losing vital childcare seats in an already fragile sector.

Thank you for your time and for your dedication to the safety of our children. I look forward to seeing a revised proposal that balances necessary safety protocols with the practical realities of childcare operations.

Sincerely,

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