

BY CLYDE WEISS

**T**housands of family child care and home care providers across the nation are winning with AFSCME! Hard work, long hours, little pay and scarce benefits are ties that bind workers in two of this nation's most demanding professions — home care and child care.

Through an aggressive national campaign, our union is standing with these workers in their fight for dignity and respect. Today, we represent 150,000 family child care profes-



Leah Hemond

# STANDING UP &

Home care workers and child care providers are on the move!

sionals, including child care providers, Head Start workers, day care center employees and early childhood workers in schools and other settings. We also represent 80,000 home care workers in the public and private sector and have campaigns to represent thousands of other home care providers in nearly a dozen states. Some recent highlights:

## **CALIFORNIA**

### **Saving Affordable Health Coverage**

The United Domestic Workers of America (UDW-NUHHCE), an AFSCME affiliate, reached an agreement last October with San Diego County officials protecting major medical health insurance for nearly 3,000 home care providers. Their insurance plan would have expired the next day had an agreement not been reached. UDW's success not only preserved members' insurance, it actually reduced their costs by 33 percent. "Health insurance is the only benefit we receive for our work," says Kerry Lingo, a UDW member and provider. "We were very scared that it would be taken away. But we rallied together and won."

The efforts of United Child Care Union stopped a proposal that would have cut California family child care providers' subsidies and hurt low-income and minority communities. Their work paved the way for a new reimbursement system that protects access to quality subsidized care.

## **IOWA**

### **One Step Closer**

Some 3,000 home care providers who organized with Council 61 last year overwhelmingly ratified a first-ever "memorandum of understanding" in December. Their agreement establishes an automatic 3 percent raise (retroactive to July 1, 2006), providing the resources they need to strengthen their home care programs and provide quality services.

Iowa's 6,000 registered child care providers also achieved a landmark victory. Last January, Governor Tom Vilsack (D) signed an unprecedented executive order granting bargaining rights to the providers, who have authorized Council 61 to represent them in contract negotiations under the banner of their new union, Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME.

## **MICHIGAN**

### **'Our Protective Shield'**

Tired of inadequate state funding, and reimbursement rates for their services as low as \$1.35 per hour in some cases, child care providers knew they had to act. First, they launched a two-year-long organizing campaign. Then, they won recognition of their union through the largest card check in modern labor history. (In card-check agreements, management agrees to voluntarily recognize the union if a majority of employees sign authorization forms or "cards.") With the help of recently re-elected Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D), they now have



# SPEAKING OUT

collective bargaining rights. Following recognition of their union, 40,000 child care providers now have a voice with Child Care Providers Together Michigan, a joint effort between AFSCME and the United Auto Workers. “The union will be our protective shield as we fight for our rights,” says Detroit provider Francisco Medina. “We won it just in time.”

**MINNESOTA**

**First in the State**

Fourteen hundred licensed Minnesota child care providers now have a voice at work, thanks to a unanimous decision by Hennepin County commissioners to partner with Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME Council 5. CCPT has been seeking partnerships with counties because they regulate child care and pay subsidies established by the state. Ramsey and St. Louis counties have also partnered with the union to improve child care by working with 865 licensed providers in Ramsey County and 420 in the Duluth and Iron Range areas.

**NEW JERSEY**

**A Stronger Voice**

Nearly 5,000 home-based child care providers are gaining power with an executive order signed last August by Gov. Jon Corzine (D) authorizing Child Care Workers Union (a joint effort by AFSCME New Jersey and the Communications Workers of America) to represent these independent contractors. Corzine’s measure marks the culmination

of a year-long campaign of door-to-door talks and activism by child care providers to organize.

**OREGON**

**Historic First Contract**

Four thousand five hundred providers represented by Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME Council 75 reached an agreement with the state that includes a landmark “Bill of Rights” and provisions to increase and expedite subsidy payments, a grievance procedure and more. “We’re going to be the first child care providers who will be working hand in hand with the state as a team,” says provider Regina Martinez of Ontario, Ore.

**WISCONSIN**

**‘No Longer Alone’**

More than 7,000 licensed and certified child care providers throughout the state have a mighty voice to negotiate improvements to child care services, thanks to an executive order signed last October by Gov. Jim Doyle (D), who was just re-elected. An independent arbitrator later certified Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME as their exclusive union representative. “We are no longer alone,” says Sonia Aguilar Villarreal, a union supporter who runs a day care center on Milwaukee’s south side.

Child care providers in New Mexico, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania are also joining together to improve and organize the child care profession. **PE**

**A MIGHTY VOICE** — Wisconsin child care providers (above) win recognition of their union, CCPT/AFSCME.

**FIRST STEPS** — Child care providers in Las Cruces, N.M. (opposite) turn out for an organizing meeting in November. Their goal: sign up a majority of the 4,000 registered providers in Doña Ana County.