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October 6, 2025

To whom it may concern:

I write to express my strong support of Rosilene (Rose) Ribeiro and Child First Step's application to expand Child First Step into a Child Development Center.

My niece, Elena Dickas, attended Child First Step from February 2020 to August 2023 and I served as her primary caregiver for a portion of that time. Those years were unfortunately a tumultuous period in Elena's life – her mother died unexpectedly when she was a baby, and when she was two years old her single father was disabled by a traumatic brain injury. At home, Elena found herself taken care of by a succession of different extended family members, many of whom she previously had limited contact with due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Rose and her team at Child First Step provided Elena with the safe, stable nurturing environment that she desperately needed in her life. Elena was always eager to get there in the morning, and she was invariably calm and happy when we picked her up at the end of the day. Elena was also verbal at an early age and was able to talk to us directly about how much she enjoyed and appreciated her time there. The incredible care that Elena received at Child First Step inarguably had an enormously positive impact on her life (and on our entire family) during some intensely challenging years.

In August 2023 Rose and her team organized a graduation ceremony for Elena and several other kids who were leaving Child First Step to begin pre-K. I spoke at the ceremony about the wonderful role that Rose and Child First Step played in Elena's life and our family's life, and I was struck by how many families told similar stories. There is no question that Rose and her team have played an enormously positive and consequential role in our community and in the lives of the children who have been lucky enough to go there. Expanding Child First Step so that it is able to provide the same superb care to a greater number of children would be a huge benefit to the local community.

I should also mention that based on my direct observation I am confident that Rose and her team would be very capable of expanding their early childhood education program as a Child Development Center. During Elena's time as Child First Step it was very clear that she was benefiting from a structured, age-appropriate curriculum that taught her foundational concepts like the alphabet, numbers, and time expressions such as days of the week, months of the year and seasons. I was simply thrilled when Elena would come

home from spending the day with Rose and her team and would eagerly spend more time drawing upper and lower case letters. The enriching education program offered at Child First Step went well beyond my expectations and is a further testament to the incredible experience that Child First Step offers to children and their families.

Thank you for considering my input as you evaluate this application. If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Dickas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Dickas