

Senator Julie Rosen
Minnesota Senate Human Services Reform, Finance & Policy Committee
RE: Please reinstate Child Care Assistance Absent Day Waivers in SF2876
February 14, 2022

Dear Chair Rosen and Committee Members,

The undersigned organizations are in support of the Child Care Assistance COVID absent day waivers removed from SF 2876 in the Human Services Reform, Finance, and Policy Committee. Children, families, and providers have been and continue to be subject to continuing and multiple quarantine periods where children are not able to attend child care. These waivers temporarily reinstate flexibilities previously in place during the Peacetime Emergency which allowed Child Care Assistance payments to continue when children were excluded from care due to COVID infection and quarantines.

The Child Care Assistance absent day waivers previously included in SF 2876 hold families and providers harmless for such COVID related absences. They prevent low-income families from being charged absent day fees during COVID isolation/quarantine, and they help to support provider revenue stability. Quarantines for young children continue to wreak havoc on families, often causing quarantine periods of up to 21 days at a time, and hit many families over and over again.

The waivers in this legislation are temporary and retroactive to November 1, 2021, tracking to the time when Omicron started causing massive disruption to child care. These waivers would allow providers to receive payment for COVID-related absent days during this time, which would in turn allow any COVID-related absent days previously charged to families during this period to be removed from their balance sheets. These waivers will provide relief and some certainty for providers and families as they continue to deal with unexpected viral variants and while vaccines are still not available for children under age 5.

Up until early January 2022 it was a child care licensing requirement that unvaccinated children (a huge percentage of those in licensed care, since 5-11 year olds were only approved for vaccine in November 2021 and no children under 5 are yet approved) be quarantined for a minimum of 10 days upon exposure. During this time many families endured, and continue to endure, multiple quarantines. Exclusion of positive cases remains a licensing requirement, and licensed providers continue to be expected to follow still-restrictive federal, local, and tribal guidance (to the best of their ability) regarding COVID quarantines in order to receive federal Child Care Stabilization Grants.

We respectfully urge these waivers to be reinstated in SF 2876 and passed as quickly as possible. They have no additional cost and were passed out of the House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee unanimously last week.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Child Care Association	Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition
Northside Achievement Zone	People Serving People
Center for Inclusive Child Care	Start Early Funders Coalition
West Central Initiative Foundation	YWCA of Minneapolis
Minnesota Head Start Association	Minnesota Alliance of YMCAs
Children's Defense Fund Minnesota	Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis
Minnesota Budget Project	ISAIAH/Kids Count on Us
Minnesota School Age Care Alliance	
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children	