

Senator Jim Abeler  
Minnesota Senate Human Services Reform, Finance & Policy Committee  
February 7, 2022

Dear Chair Abeler and Committee Members,

The undersigned organizations are in support of the Child Care Assistance COVID absent day waivers contained in SF2876. 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. SF2876 temporarily reinstates 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 included in SF2876 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.

The Child Care Assistance waivers in SF2876 would temporarily reinstate some supports providers and families relied on earlier in the pandemic, helping both as they continue to balance maintaining financial stability with the health and safety of children and educators.

We respectfully urge these waivers to be reinstated as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

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| 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                                  | ISIAH/Kids Count on Us                       |
| Minnesota School Age Care Alliance                        |  |
| Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children |  |