



February 19, 2023

Dear Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Child Care Association (MCCA), I would like to register our enthusiastic support for Senate File 1276. We have long advocated for significant investment in Early Learning Scholarships ("Scholarships") as well as making them available to all income-eligible children birth to kindergarten.

Early Learning Scholarships are a nationally-known Minnesota innovation. Other states and localities have modeled their own efforts off of ours, impressed with their targeted nature, flexibility and choice for parents, tie to quality, and documented positive effects not only on child outcomes but also on parental employment and stimulating the private market to expand and create more child care supply.

Quality child care IS early education, full stop. Sadly state investment in Scholarships has stagnated for many years, leaving many currently-eligible children unserved (not to mention all the infants and toddlers not yet eligible) and disappointing parents and providers.

Full funding for Scholarships is a no-brainer. We know this works. Every child in a low-income family should be able to access this if the parents so choose. Expanding age eligibility to the full birth to kindergarten spectrum is also an obvious choice. With 80% of brain development happening in the 0-3 years, this is the time to invest in quality early education! These are also the most expensive child care years for parents, and the ages for which child care supply is most scarce statewide.

We do ourselves and our state a disservice when we make supports available only to certain "age bands" within early childhood. We do the same when we know something like Scholarships work but fail to fund all eligible. We further complicate the system for families trying to do best by their children. Families need multiple options for all children birth to kindergarten, including those that help working families access full-day, year round programming. This bill steps up to empower low-income families with young children while stepping up for both our current workforce and its future needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clare Sanford".

Clare Sanford
Chair, Government Relations, Minnesota Child Care Association