

February 21, 2023

Members of the Senate Finance Education Committee In Reference to SF1276

I am pleased to write this letter to express our strong support for increased funding for the Minnesota Early Learning Scholarship Program. Scholarships are desperately needed. The Northland Foundation supports increased funding for the Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships. As the Region Three Area Administrator of Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships for the seven counties of northeast Minnesota, we are all too aware that more scholarships are urgently needed. As an Area Administrator, we annually have a lengthy wait list of qualifying families with young children for scholarship funding. There are thousands of young children statewide who are eligible for scholarships; but due to insufficient state funding cannot get a scholarship.

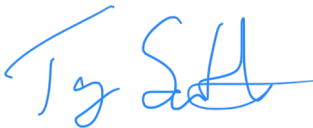
Scholarships work across Minnesota. As the number of providers who are Parent Aware rated has grown, opportunity to access quality care for young children has increased. Families are now able to access rated programs that can accept scholarships within a reasonable distance to their homes.

We have seen Early Learning Scholarships work across our region. Scholarships are important incentives for providers who volunteer for ratings. Northeastern Minnesota has the highest participation of licensed child care centers and homes in the Parent Aware rating system. Part of the success rests on honoring providers for their tremendous contributions to our communities. One of those incentives is the opportunity to serve children with Early Learning Scholarships. In fact, a statewide survey of providers showed that the ability to serve Scholarshipchildren was a top reason why providers volunteered for Parent Aware, which ultimately benefits the children in their care.

Please consider supporting increased funding for Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships. This funding is desperately needed for children and families to access quality child care wherever they are living in Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tony Sertich
President