

Doctors for Early Childhood
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MN Senate Health and Human Services Committee
1100 Senate Office Building

February 20, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund, Vice Chair Alice Mann, Ranking Member Utke, and Committee Members,

I am Dale Dobrin, MD, a member of Doctors for Early Childhood, an education and advocacy group. I am writing in support of SF 1680, the Family, Friends, and Neighbors Bill. As we know, earliest childhood is a time of dramatic brain growth. MILLIONS of connections (synapses) are made every minute. Brain size increases to 50% of adult size by age 1 and 80% by age 3. Truly, these “first thousand days” are key for a person’s life course.

People stressed by poverty often cannot provide the loving nurturing and developmental supports they desire and their babies and toddlers need. Too often mothers need to return to work within weeks of a baby’s arrival. Returning to work to help make ends meet may be at odd hours or childcare is not available or affordable.

Because of these circumstances, family, friends, and neighbors are called upon to help. Babies are learning (yes, actual learning!) from the moment of birth and even before. What they learn is heavily influenced by the quality of their “to and fro’ interactions with others. Developmentally-on-track TLC responses to babies’ movements, expressions, and vocalizations can be taught and learned. It is just as important for family, friends, and neighbors as it is for other early educators and caregivers.

It is here that SF 1680 is so important. Its funding will provide up to date training to FFN’s for babies and toddlers to learn the most. Having this Great Start is critical for later learning and life beyond. Without it, school can be a struggle, and the cycle of generational poverty can repeat itself. What is not acquired in 0-3 often cannot be remediated.

Please give your votes for the important work this bill will support.

Respectfully, Doctors for Early Childhood: Doctors Alden, Dobrin, Meland, and Sheldon