



Minnesota Child Care Provider
Information Network
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March 15, 2023

RE: SF2229 – Great Start For Minnesota

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 26 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I had the privilege to be a member of the Great Start Task force as a community/advisory (non-voting member) and attended almost all of the monthly meetings. This included participating on the Compensation sub group also on a monthly basis.

Much of what is in this bill is reflective of the work that took place and is aligned with the intent of the Task Force. The intention of supporting families, children and those providing services, Licensed Family Child Care included, will accomplish the goal of the task force.

There are two aspects of this bill which MCCPIN perceives as not representative of the work nor the intention of supporting those providing services, in particular Licensed Family Child Care.

Between the task force closure and the introduction of this bill, I have asked repeatedly to be in discussion on these two points with those evidently tasked with bringing this bill language forward. I have been met with silence. I come here to be heard by decision makers with the hopes that I will receive discussion, not silence.

These two points are as follows:

1) Licensing becomes the entry point as a 1 star rated program.

This step was proposed by the task force to have a working group evaluate the implementation and impact on those providing services. Implementing this standard without such an evaluation skip over the concerns which I and others within LFCC raised. **We are asking for the evaluation prior to the implementation.**

Parent Aware is a long-standing program and has many positive aspects. MCCPIN and I personally have worked to engage LFCCs to participate and have attempted to engage with DHS and others in leadership to fix aspects within Parent Aware which are not positive nor supporting LFCCs.

LFCC have a lower participation rate into PA due to very real and struggling situations. Frequently, FCCs have a negative experience with coaches, language, computer process, and then raters who inconsistently apply decisions. I have had on-going discussions with DHS staff and though have felt heard, see nothing changing.

- **Separate rating process (QDIP).** Rating LFCCs within a center and school standard is disrespectful to our business culture and continues to show the overall lack of



understanding as to the value LFCCs offer to families. This includes continuity of care with the provider, family connection, multi-age setting where siblings can stay connected and all children can interact and benefit from each other.

- **Ensuring that coaches and raters understand, respect and value** the unique and amazing settings LFCCs offer.
- **Re-evaluate how grants are distributed.** Grants are a great benefit to our programs, however FCCs often struggle to take advantage of the dollars awarded.
 - There are inconsistencies and narrow windows of what the grants can be spent on. More bookshelves does not increase the quality of care.
 - The reimbursement process where a provider must expend upwards of \$4,000 and then wait up to easily 2 months for reimbursement is cost prohibitive.
 - The way around the reimbursement process is to purchase materials from designated 'choice' vendor whereby the Parent Aware programs pay for materials upfront. Again these vendors are the major companies which narrows me to bookshelves and materials to choose from if I can't upfront the dollars.
- **Make the process of being rated equitable.** FCCs as a sole proprietor are the front and center to training and implementation of Parent Aware in our programs. FCCs take all of the necessary training, obtain the skills, and implement them directly to the children and families we serve. Other program types train a few staff to standard and make decisions on the program. Other staff easily have no knowledge of what a Parent Aware program is and why they are rated to the level they are, though they are typically at the highest level of 4 star. FCCs are fully trained and knowledgeable of what is expected.
- These points combined with the governors budget that those who do not want this standard can not have the financial supports of the workforce retention (previous stabilization grants) is a strong arm to force providers into a corner. The disrespect has been felt and there will be more providers feeling unsupported and potentially leaving the field.

2) **Competencies Task Force/working group.**

During the Great Start Task force it became clear that there was a difference in value of college degrees and non-college training/experience. Much of this is based on a national effort, Power to the Profession, which aims towards comparable pay to schools and college degrees. The competencies are also included in the PTP.

Though many FCCs have higher education, including myself with a BA in education, many FCCs enter the field with their own children and lack this higher education. They gain expertise through experience and on-going trainings, granted, some more than others Working 10+ hours a day, having a young family and access to more time/energy to take courses is a barrier. This barrier is even more amplified within our minority/immigrant communities.



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The evaluation of competencies is critical, and it is important that those conducting this evaluation have a balanced understanding of higher education standards with trainings & experience.

It is critical that this Competencies Task Force be structured such that those who value competencies are well represented. As presented there is a heavy representation of those in Higher Education and other walks of life who have historically not valued training & experience. Child Care Aware presented a preference during the task force that the competencies be phased out. Many on the task force were somewhere in the middle.

We are asking for an increase in FCC representation on this task for and an assurance that those others involved truly have a respect for the full profession when making decisions, not an investment in the higher education standard. There are program who financially benefit from higher education being promoted through administrative fees and increased tuition.

Families will loose as FCCs and other programs without the financial gains and the burden of the cost of time and effort will not be supported.

We are asking that these two aspects of the Great Start be evaluated, and the bill be reworked to fully support all programs.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham