



March 17, 2023

To: Senator Wiklund and members of the Senate Health and Human Services committee

TESTIMONY for SF 2606 authored by Senator Boldon

Thank you for allowing me to share my support for this legislation. I am Hope Doerner a Faculty in Early Childhood Education Department at Minneapolis College. I am here today to share with you the need for continued and increased support for the early childhood education profession. As a person with over 35 years of experience in the field, I can honestly say that the need for support has never been so great as it is today. I see students daily at my college wanting to improve their skills with children and improve their practices but are struggling financially to make ends meet.

This bill allows for the continuation of support for those who are currently in the field seeking college credentials as well as encouraging more to join the field in the Empower to Educate and Apprenticeship programs. The TEACH Early Childhood Scholarships are truly the only way many of my students can afford to get a college education. This opportunity allows the students to have at least 90% of their costs covered by the scholarship and support from their program. The scholarship allows them to have all their expenses covered: tuition, fees, books, computers, etc. This allows students to stay debt free in an industry that is vital to the overall economic success of our state, while not always providing them with wages they may deserve. The students I see at my college are mostly first generation college students, women, most from the BIPOC community, and many with families of their own. These are students who need financial support.

I will say that most of my students are currently working in the field and are looking to improve their practice and opportunities for their long-term careers by gaining a college degree. What has been helpful is the addition of Early Childhood Education Programs to the Workforce Development Scholarship. This funding can be used alone or in addition to the TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship which can then help with other costs like transportation and cost of living expenses. The difficulty some students face is the competition for the Workforce Development Scholarships.



The reason for the lower percentage of students in the Early Childhood Education field accessing these scholarships can vary from campus to campus. We know that the state does not have enough spaces available for all the birth to 5-year-old children whose families want to work. Some early childhood programs servicing families have closed and others do not have enough workers to fill the remaining open positions to meet the need. It is time to look at carving out a set amount of money specifically for Early Childhood Education Programs within the Workforce Development Scholarship to help alleviate this shortage. This dedicated funding can also help campuses market specifically to encourage more students into the field of early childhood education benefiting not just those students or programs or families but the state as a whole.

Thank you for taking the time to read my support and I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

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