

March 22, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund  
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Think Small, we are writing in support of SF 2966.

At Think Small our mission is to advance the quality care and education of children in their crucial early years. We serve the 7-county metro area and are seeing dramatic changes in child care supply and the emergence of troubling trends such as center closures and the closure of Parent Aware-rated programs. This supply crisis is especially impacting BIPOC children and low-income neighborhoods. The lack of access impacts young children's development and exacerbates opportunity gaps, which lead to later disparities.

We need big, bold solutions to address these challenges. We are grateful to see some of those solutions contained in this bill. We support the Child Care Retention Payments as a key strategy for retaining child care programs across the state.

We are also very supportive of the components of the bill that address child care supply concerns. The one-stop regional assistance network, or Child Care Wayfinder, has been very effective in supporting providers who want to open or expand their child care program. Empower 2 Educate, a program that supports people to receive job skills training, career counseling, and job placement assistance is also helpful for the child care field.

We've seen the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) waitlist grow to very high levels in recent months, and the proposals in this bill to increase reimbursement rates, reprioritize the waitlist, and fund more families from the waitlist will help children, families and providers.

Thank you again for your work to support young children and families in Minnesota. We applaud the Walz-Flanagan Administration's leadership on this issue and look forward to working together to build on these proposals to get Minnesota's children ages birth to five off to the greatest start possible. Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Barbara Yates  
President and CEO, Think Small