



February 20, 2023

The Honorable Bobby Joe Champion, Chair
Senate Jobs & Economic Development Committee
Minnesota Senate Building 3401
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Rich Draheim, Ranking Minority Leader
Senate Jobs & Economic Development Committee
Minnesota Senate Building 2225
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support Senate File 1612

Dear Chair Champion, Ranking Minority Leader Draheim, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Greater Mankato Growth, the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Organization representing more than 900 members in the Greater Mankato region, I write in support of Senate File 1612 to provide \$10,000,000 for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grants for Child Care Program. Fully funding this program in addition to the Greater Minnesota Child Care Facility Grant Program (SF1612) would represent strategic investments in a critical industry for every corner of our state.

The mission of Greater Mankato Growth (GMG) is to support and promote the economic growth and vitality of our members and the regional marketplace. Access to affordable childcare is a major barrier to filling our economy's workforce needs. The Mankato-North Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has a labor shed of nearly 300,000 people and has grown by more than 21% since 2000. Strategically investing in childcare is a top priority for our members and will promote economic growth and vitality of our region.

GMG is a proud partner in economic development as part of the Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDA) which includes five cities along with Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. In this public-private partnership, we promote an atmosphere of cooperation, leveraging our unique strengths, and providing efficient and effective service delivery in order to facilitate continued economic prosperity of our region. Our work in recent years has heavily focused on supporting existing employers. Childcare is routinely listed as a top concern to recruiting and retaining talent. Creative solutions like the grant program in SF1612 is just one tool we support to help address the childcare needs in Greater Minnesota.

We urge you to fully fund SF1612 for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Grants for Child Care Program for \$10 million.

Respectfully,

Andy Wilke
Director of Business Development & Public Affairs

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