

LEAD & CARE

Association of Family Child Care Professionals



Partnering with Providers, Supporting Family Child Care Businesses

PO Box 1136

Prior Lake, MN 55372

507-330-3110

To: Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee

Date: February 29, 2024

RE: SF3922 relating to education finance; allowing school-age care programs to provide preschool care;

Mister Chair and Committee Members:

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

I am testifying on behalf of our state association for licensed family childcare providers.

I am calling into question this bill, the committee moving it forward and the impact of this bill on the childcare industry, in particular licensed Family Childcare.

- **This is again another way which will funnel preschool children out of Family Childcare programs.** (likely will do the same for centers). The expansion of school-based pre-K has pulled pre-k from licensed childcare programs which are highly capable of high-quality care for children. This expansion will draw away even more from the limited wrap around care that will be offered outside of the school setting. As has been frequently referenced in this committee, FCC's cannot have sustainable businesses with only infants and toddlers.
- **School based pre-kindergarten** has already diminished FCC programs. At minimum wrap-around care can be provided by FCCs. The continuity of care, which is seen as the most critical impact on a child's care, happens in our programs, not schools which are closed at significant times.
- **Certified Centers are evaluated as quality care.** I am confused by the continuance of expansion of certified centers. These programs cannot be evaluated as a quality program as they cannot participate in Parent Aware program. These programs cannot participate in Parent Aware, training is limited, 16-year-olds can provide care and ratios are high. This does not meet any quality standard put forth by the state. In legislation, a 16-year-old can care for 4 infants. Though DHS says this can't happen, they have not made sure that the legislation changes. Comparing any 16-year-old care with licensed care is degrading to licensed programs.
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/245H>

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- **The addition of more certified center staff will draw funding from the Great Start Compensation, further reducing supports for licensed program.** Certified centers are allowed to participate in the Great Start Compensation and are pulling dollars intended to support quality care thereby reducing the amount of the grants' licensed programs are receiving. Funding is needed to support licensed programs which provide the quality care that this committee has deemed essential.
- **Short sighted care solution.** Communities will only have care while school is in session. Childcare will still be needed for non-school days, holidays, and summers. There will not be non-school care available as other programs will not be able to stay in business. Communities need to be encouraged to expand support for FCCs.
- **Funding needs to spread out, not focused on schools.** There is already money provided for schools, this does not need to be increased for the purpose of providing childcare for pre-k programs.

Please, do not move this bill forward and instead find ways to find ways to support, not diminish, licensed family childcare.

Cyndi Cunningham

Public Policy Chairperson, Lead & Care