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Dear Members of the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee;

**In response to concerns from School Social Workers across the state of Minnesota, we are writing on behalf of the Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) in support of H. F. 2331.** The bill would reinstate the exemption to the absent day limit for children of teen parents who are attending school and receiving childcare assistance in a school-based programs. In addition, these programs provide parenting support, social services and career and employment services. During the 2011 legislative session, this exception was eliminated and the number of excusable absences was reduced from 25 to 10. This change would take effect in 2013.

According to America's Promise Alliance (2010), only 40% of teen mothers finish high school which has a devastating impact on our economy. The adolescent parent faces multiple barriers such as homelessness, domestic violence, lack of support from family or the community and mental health barriers that often interfere with their school success. Research shows that teen parents who utilize school-based childcare are more likely to graduate from school. Comprehensive, evidence-based programs, including school-based childcare and effective parenting practices, can promote high school graduation rates as well as enhance the overall well-being of the adolescent parents and their children (Ball & Moore, 2008).

Although this legislation was created to curb what some feel is a waste of money, it would have adverse effects on teen parents and their children by imposing a barrier to their educational attainment. Without consistent, reliable childcare, teen parents will fall further behind academically and ultimately there will be an increase in the number of teen parents who drop out of high school if this provision moves forward. In a study that examined the impact of high school drop outs on the economy, Levin and Belfield in 2007 found the average high school dropout costs the economy approximately \$240,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower tax contributions, higher reliance on Medicaid and Medicare, higher rates of criminal activity, and higher reliance on welfare.

**MSSWA supports reinstating exemption for absent day limit for teen parents, who are attending school and receiving childcare assistance in a school-based childcare program. Reinstatement of this exemption is in the best interest of these teens and the future of their children. Your support of H.F. 2331 will ensure that teen parents continue to receive childcare assistance that will allow them to complete high school, making them productive citizens.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**Sincerely,**

**Tammie Knick, MSW, LGSW      and  
MSSWA President**

**Christy McCoy, MSW, LICSW  
MSSWA Legislative Chair**

Celebrating Over 40 Years of MSSWA: Serving Children Through Their School, Home & Community