March 6, 2019

RE: HF1120 Compulsory instruction requirements modified, and school districts required to offer kindergarten.

Madam Chair & Committee members.

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 20 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I am testifying in **opposition of HF1120** which changes the compulsory education from age 7 to age 6 and requires all school districts to offer kindergarten.

First of all, the basis of freedom of choice is being infringed on during this session in many avenues. Yes, most children attend kindergarten and most school districts offer kindergarten. However, requiring these two steps to take place removes the choice from both the family and the community.

Not all children are ready socially or emotionally to be in an all-day everyday classroom setting. The classroom setting is frequently not ready for the child. Studies are showing that children are not ready for school and there are major pushes to reach these goals, however, children may not be ready and need more time to be ready. Why take that away?

When my own son was going to turn 5 in August, I had to evaluate whether he was going to be ready to be successful in a public kindergarten classroom setting. I decided he was not and found an alternative Early Childhood Education setting that fit his needs. He has grown into an accomplished adult and is pursuing his RN degree in nursing after having served in the Marine Corp. He is successful in life! In spite of not having attended traditional kindergarten at 5.

Under this bill I would not have had the opportunity to do what was best for my child and family. Parents deserve the opportunity to find the best Early Childhood option for their child. There are many paths which lead to success in school and life. This will remove those options.

The push to place all children in a school setting needs to stop. It is disingenuous. Who is benefiting from this direction? It is not the children. It is the systems and those involved in supporting the systems. Studies consistently show that it is not developmentally appropriate to expect a young child (yes 6) to be expected to be in a chair learning academics. That is not what brings success in later years.

Studies show that building social emotional ability and involvement with family and the whole child is what builds a capable student in later years. Not the placement in a classroom earlier and earlier.

Please oppose HF1120. Leave families and children with the choice to have a choice in their childhood.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham

MCCPIN Public Policy Chairperson