



People Serving People

614 3rd Street South, Minneapolis, MN 55415 • 612.332.4500

March 14th, 2017

Chairman Dean, members of the committee,

My name is Emma Juon and I am the Educational Services Manager at People Serving People, Minnesota's largest and most comprehensive shelter for children and their families experiencing homelessness. We support the program improvements in H.F. 1458.

In 2016 People Serving People sheltered nearly 2000 children and their families. The average age of a child at our shelter is 6 years old. Last year, more than 300 young children attended our onsite 4-Star Parent Aware rated, NECPA accredited Early Childhood Development Program. For many children attending our program, this was their first opportunity to experience a structured, quality early learning environment.

The healthy development of children early in life is a key indicator of future success, but barriers to learning opportunities start early and only continue to grow wider without quality intervention, such as access to high quality early learning. The most substantial period of brain development that a brain will experience in a lifetime occurs from birth to age three. In the first year of life, a baby's brain develops 700 new neural connections per second and these new connections are the foundation on which the baby's brain architecture is built. Early experiences, both positive and negative, effect the development of this architecture, which can produce effects on learning that last a lifetime. In a child 18 months old, there are already statistically significant differences in language and vocabulary use between a child from a family with high socioeconomic status and a child from a family with low socioeconomic status. By the age of five, 90% of a child's critical brain development has occurred.

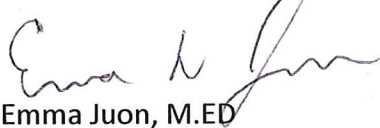
Access to quality early education is a proven way to support healthy child development and close opportunity gaps, but we cannot do it without passing bills such as H.F. 1458. Access to high quality early learning helps create a stable, consistent learning environment for a child who may not have much other consistency in his or her life. Particularly for families experiencing homelessness, we support the provision for creating an expedited five business day application process with proof of eligibility within three months. These families are very highly mobile, and this provision will make a dramatic improvement in their ability to access and maintain stable childcare.

PeopleServingPeople.org

Helping families find their way home.

By adopting these program improvements in H.F. 1458 we can help our state's most vulnerable children make real gains to close the opportunity gap and set themselves up for future success. Passing this bill is a two-generational solution that provides for better access to high quality care for children, helps close the opportunity gap, helps parents find and keep employment in order to support their families and maintain stability, and helps families break the cycle of homelessness.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Juon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "J".

Emma Juon, M.ED

Educational Services Manager, People Serving People