



MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

December 11, 2020

Representative Dave Pinto
439 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Pinto and members of the House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division,

On behalf of our membership, thank you for the opportunity to provide thoughts on a proposal before the Legislature related to the Child Care Assistance Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) waitlist. By way of background, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) is a professional association of human service administrators that serve the citizens of Minnesota's 87 counties. Our member counties are responsible for the management of the BSF waitlist and are committed to finding ways to manage that list to effectively and positively affect the children and families we serve while maximizing access to this important program.

MACSSA supports the BSF waitlist temporary reprioritization and funding included in the proposal before you (7SS-AM009). The additional resources will allow families currently on extensive wait lists to have their needs filled, while the reprioritization will result in targeted families receiving these resources more quickly.

Current funding is insufficient to be able to assist low-income families in securing quality child care. Many of these families include adults who are essential workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The intent of the BSF child care program is to support working families (and those seeking work) by ensuring that their children have quality child care. BSF child care offers a ladder and support out of poverty as adults attend training necessary to prepare for work, seek work, and participate in work.

MACSSA supports increasing funding and aligning existing resources to reduce BSF waiting lists to maximize statewide spending and better meet the needs of Minnesota families. Counties appreciate this proposal that both increases funding and reorganizes the five categories of families within the BSF waitlist, which will help us more quickly and effectively distribute resources to families that need this critical assistance.

This proposal would have the effect of moving families already receiving child care benefits funded through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) to the bottom of the waitlist so that categories of families currently not receiving child care benefits would be served first. This allows scarce state resources to be quickly targeted to veterans and working poor families to be served before MFIP recipient families. As a result, more children would receive care and counties would be able to better maximize services while being prudent stewards of local resources.

MACSSA recommends minor modifications to this proposal as it moves forward. Primarily, counties recommend extending the waitlist look-back period from 6 months (in current proposal) to 12 months. We believe that changing this tabulation used for distributing state funds would be a more equitable

and accurate allocation of resources to counties. Looking at only 6 months of data for a program that runs on a 12-month cycle means that counties with genuine needs will be left out, while other counties' needs will be overstated.

MACSSA also recommends modifying the proposal so that the Portability Pool (PP) families are the 4th priority and MFIP Transition Year Extension (TYE) families are 5th (last) on the waitlist priority. Both groups are already eligible to access child care assistance while they are on the BSF wait list, so this change does not impact families' child care benefits. However, the Portability Pool is funded with a subset of BSF dollars while Transition Year Extension is funded through forecasted MFIP dollars. Because of the size of the MFIP TYE group, the PP families could sit on waitlists for significant amounts of time while other priority categories are considered, and limited BSF funds would be directed toward this group rather than toward families waiting for service. The recommended modification would strategically leverage forecasted state resources to meet the needs of more Minnesota families. This realignment will ensure that a greater proportion of new resources are utilized for families not already receiving child care benefits.

Thank you for your support and work on behalf of the children and families of Minnesota. As you contemplate this or other child care proposals, please consider MACSSA a resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Freeman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Freeman
Executive Director