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To Whom It May Concern:

As a licensed social worker who was the former director of the Salvation Army Harbor Light and Program Manager of Families Moving Forward Family Shelter, I have witnessed working families being afflicted with the lack of day care subsidies which often kept them from attending school and gainful employment. I never thought that I would find myself in this situation, but it happened because grandparents as parents is a growing trend. We are the recent adoptive parents of 2 wonderful little boys. We are also parents on the county wait list for Child Care Assistance.

December 29, 2017; our 23-year-old daughter had gotten into some legal trouble and was incarcerated. She asked us to take care of her then 6-month-old son, Milan. After she was released, as grandparents, we felt it was in his best interest that he continued to live with us. You see, he is hearing impaired which also causes him to have a delay in his speech. He has been enrolled at New Horizons Academy since he was 8 months old and he is now 3. New Horizons Academy has been very instrumental in his care. They are more than just a daycare center. They have been an essential piece to the progress that he has made. The teachers learned sign language, ordered special books, supplies, and participated in a training on how to properly care for his hearing aids and put them on when he would pull them out. Milan currently attends New Horizon Academy via an Early Learning Scholarship and on December 21, 2020, his scholarship cap will reach its limit. He will have to leave program for six months unless he is able to receive services via the Child Care Assistance Program. Not being in school would be detrimental to him for he needs the social interaction as well as their education curriculum.

On February 9, 2018; our 23-year-old niece's son Zander was in foster care and Anoka County was looking for an adoptive family, and he came to us as well. He has been attending New Horizons Academy since he was 11 months old. He also has some special needs and again New Horizon Academy has been instrumental in his care. He is becoming more social, less anxious and using more words. It is also fun to watch him get on the floor and do the Yoga moves that they have taught him. On December 2, 2020, Zander turned 3 and was therefore no longer eligible for Early Head Start services, which had allowed him to attend New Horizons through their partnership with that program. I applied for an Early Learning Scholarship for him knowing that Milan benefitted from that funding. I was told the waitlist is at 50 and they said, "we don't know when he will be awarded a scholarship." Unless he also receives Child Care Assistance, he will continue to be at home with us. He cries every morning wanting to go back to school and it breaks my heart.

My husband is retired and on a fixed income. I am currently recovering from COVID-19 w/Pneumonia and am on oxygen and not yet able to return to work. Our family size is seven and we simply cannot afford to pay to have our boys attend New Horizons Academy without some type of help. I sincerely and humbly ask you to support the idea of funding families currently on Child Care Assistance wait lists. It is so hard to know the type of education and support they're missing or soon will be. Moreover, I will need the boys to be able to attend child care as soon as I'm able to return to my job as a social worker. The boys' school is more than just a child care center; they are an educational service; just as essential as an elementary or high school. School is essential at any age, but it is scientifically proven that the biggest impact in education is in the first five years of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration, for our boys and for the families all over the state.

Jacqueline Scott-Hopkins