



March 5, 2021

Re: Support for HFs 411, 412, and 260

Dear Chair Noor and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Child Care Association (MCCA), I write in support of all three child care-related bills being heard in committee on March 8, 2021. MCCA is a statewide association of licensed child care providers whose mission is to promote the success of licensed childcare centers as an integral part of Minnesota's early education system. We serve as a voice for professional, high-quality child care that is affordable, accessible, and able to meet the diverse needs of Minnesota families.

The ongoing child care grants through the Department of Employment & Economic Development (HF 412) are a welcome resource for providers statewide. We especially appreciate that they focus on child care infrastructure broadly, for while facility expenses are a need, it is the ongoing operation of child care that presents the greatest challenge. This bill's flexible funds can be used as providers most need them, whether that is incentives to attract/retain qualified early educators, training and support to become Parent Aware-rated, or technical assistance for the business aspects of child care.

Our state's new greater Minnesota child care facility grants (HF 411) meet a more discrete need in expanding child care supply but are another part of the puzzle. This bill would provide facility grants directly to providers interested in opening/expanding in greater Minnesota, helping to subsidize facility costs and prevent those from being passed on in the form of parent tuition or suppressed staff wages.

MCCA is also strongly in support of adding state funds to the Retaining Early Educators by Attaining Incentives Now (REETAIN) program, HF 260. Facilities and business supports are only one piece needed for child care sustainability; the abysmal compensation in the field makes it incredibly difficult to attract and retain qualified early educators, particularly for children 0-5. REETAIN has a track record of helping experienced child care professionals remain in the field when greater compensation is available just about anywhere else. Parents can't pay more, and providers can't make less – these compensation supplements help providers get a bit more stability without passing costs on to parents.

All of these bills provide support and important signals for current and potential child care providers: if you want to do this work, if you want to do it well, the state wants to help invest in you. In our COVID-19 economic recovery this message, and real support, is more important than ever.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clare J. Sanford".

Clare Sanford
MCCA Government Relations Chair
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