



March 17, 2023

To: Rep. Gene Pelowski, Jr. and the members of the House Higher Educations Finance and Policy Committee

TESTIMONY for OHE budget bill

Thank you for taking the time to include my testimony. I am Hope Doerner a Faculty in the Early Childhood Education Department at Minneapolis College. I am here today to share with you the need for a coordinated and publicized system to transition non-credit training and credentials into the higher education system in Minnesota.

This effort would help all levels of professionals within the field to have a systematic and transparent career lattice based upon educational attainments. Early Childhood Education is unique in the educational system in that we have practitioners that can start in the field with no experience or educational requirements but need professionals to earn higher education credits to meet current licensing standards as well as to provide high quality educational experiences for children. Many educators have not seen themselves as college bound and opt to earn a non-credit credential. In doing so, they are seeing that they have the skills and abilities to complete college coursework. We need to honor their efforts and work with the field to increase the educational levels and quality within early childhood programs throughout the state.

Many higher education programs in the state currently do provide a pathway for credit for prior learning for the CDA but it is not seamless nor available at every institution. I do know that at Minneapolis College and several other two-year campuses within the Minnesota State System do so, but it is not widely known. For example, our college received a one-time contract from MDE to support the transition of CDA to college credits. The marketing encouraged the CDA recipients to complete an additional 4 classes (12 credits) to receive their Early Childhood Education Certificate. We were able to recruit 32 students in 5 weeks to our fall schedule in 2022 and another 27 in our spring recruitment efforts.

What was shared over and over by the CDA recipients, and their employers, was that they had no idea that credit for prior learning was an option at a college level. They also did not know much if anything about early childhood scholarships that could cover most if not all the costs at a college or university. This example is exactly why we need a more concerted effort to align the two- and four-year state institutions to accept the CDA and potentially other credit for prior learning opportunities.



Once that can be established, we can market as a system the clear pathway to an Early Childhood Education Award whether it be a certificate, diploma, associate or bachelor level. We can then work with the professional development advisors in the state for early childhood education as well as professional organizations to spread the word. We are in the process of data collection from our MDE contract and are finding that many of the CDA students are staying past the 18-credit certificate and are moving towards earning an associate degree in Early Childhood Education.

This budget recommendation can benefit children, families, and professionals in the field of early childhood education by supporting access to higher education and bring higher quality into classrooms.

Thank you for taking the time to read my support and I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

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