

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Krista Spizzo and I serve as the Director of Health Services for Whitefish at the Lakes, an assisted living community for seniors in Crosslake, MN. I lead a team of home health aids, nursing assistants and nurses to help keep our vulnerable adults safe. While I'm busy at work during this especially challenging time for tenants and employees, I am ever so thankful for my childcare provider, Little People Learning Center. I would not be able to continue to serve in my current function without the support of Little People, with whom I entrust the care of my 1 year old. If my childcare provider were to have closed their doors during this crisis, I would have had to make extreme sacrifices in order to ensure my family is safe and secure, including the possibility of having to step out of my current position.

Please include my message of support as written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing on April 16th. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Krista Spizzo RN
Director of Health Services
Whitefish at the Lakes
35625 Ostlund Ave
Crosslake MN 55442
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whitefishatthelakes.com



**Whitefish
at the Lakes**
A Distinctive Senior Community

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Dear Committee Members,

My name is Becka Magnan and my Husband and I are proud parents of a 5 year old girl. Our Daughter attends Little People Learning Center in Pequot Lakes, MN. I work for an electric Co-op and my Husband is employed by a propane company. Our employment is very essential to our community. Stable and consistent childcare allows us to keep working and supporting our community. Our Daughter is type one diabetic and she needs consistent care by trained professionals which is provided at Little People Learning Center. Little People is also assisting with distance learning so that we can focus on continuing to provide essential basic utility service to our area.

Please use this as a testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing taking place on April 16th.

Thank you,

Becka Magnan

5335 9th Ave SW
Pequot Lakes, MN 56472

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Ashley and I currently work from home as my job is not deemed "essential" to work in person at the office. I work in software sales for a small tech startup in Minneapolis. The company recently laid off 50% of the workforce, leaving me as the only person in sales. If we don't hit our revenue goals for this quarter, there will be more layoffs. More people without work, filing for unemployment & struggling to put food on the table.

My husband Rob works for Abbott where he oversees the manufacturing production line. Right now Abbott is mass producing rapid Covid-19 tests. The manufacturing production line can not resume if my husband is not there to oversee their health & safety.

I cannot even begin to explain to you how important it is for us to have childcare during this pandemic. Sunshine Station has been SUCH an amazing blessing- I'm tearing up as I write this!! They have allowed for us to continue with our jobs that will help so many others.

My girls love going to their school at Sunshine Station, they ask if they can go 100 days per week! Honestly, having them home would force one of us to quit our jobs because of our kids ages and needs.

Thank you,
Ashley & Robert Martin
3050 Shadow Ridge Drive
Rockford, MN. 55373

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Ashley Martin

Please share the following letter as deemed appropriate:

To whom it may concern,

Just Like Home School Age Child Care is a small, family owned business that has been serving our community and our state for almost 17 years. We currently have 165 school age children (about 125 families) enrolled. We are very passionate about the care, experiences, and opportunities we provide to children and proud of the program we have developed to serve our community. While the school district also provides a school age child care program, our community requires both entities to adequately serve our quickly growing community needs, as well as offer families “best fit” choices. We have long collaborated with the school district and other community leaders to best provide for the families we serve within this community. Currently, that means remaining open, as requested by the State of Minnesota, and providing emergency child care to the families of essential workers, as well as supporting distance learning for the children we are serving during this time.

While we provide center based licensed child care through the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services and under Rule 3 just as early childhood centers do, school age child care often gets overlooked. This has been our ongoing experience and a source of frustration and disappointment since opening in 2004. We realize that most school age child care is provided by the school districts, but there are a few licensed school age child care centers that do operate independent of any school district. We are necessary. We are licensed. We have been asked to remain open just like every school and every center serving ages birth to 5. Without support, we will not be able to weather the COVID-19 emergency, and our communities and families will feel that impact greatly when this is over. Already, we were ineligible to apply for the SMIF grants that were introduced earlier this month, as they were only for centers serving ages 0-5. We fear that licensed school age child care centers will continue to be overlooked as we move forward and further financial support is established.

We ask that during this time the well-being and sustainability of child care in the state of Minnesota encompass all licensed child care, including school age care.

Thank you for your consideration,

Marlo Bungum and Maggie Fitch
Just Like Home School Age Child Care, Kasson, MN
jlhsacc@gmail.com
507-634-6040

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to submit a written testimony for the Early Childhood committee hearing.

My children attend Little People Daycare in Breezy Point, MN- Owner is Lori Elison.

I am a Nurse Practitioner and am a mom of two young children. My husband is also an essential employee who works for Crow Wing County. Having access to stable childcare at this time of crisis is vital for my husband and I. As a healthcare worker, these times are very stressful and to know my kids are safe and I am able to serve the community during this time of crisis. This also allows my children to have a sense of normalcy at daycare.

Thank you for your time,

Karli Dullum
7995 White Overlook Drive
Breezy Point, MN 56472

To Members of the Early Childhood Committee:

Please allow me to express a very real concern. My teaching team at Primrose School of Woodbury is coming in to work every day, to teach and care for children of the Tier 1 & Tier 2 employees in the state of MN per the Governor's request. My teachers come in to contact with the families and the children whom are essential to the state of MN. Including first responders, Doctors, State employees, police & fire and more.

We recently went from a typical day of caring for 170 children, to now caring for just 30 children each day. We had teachers whom requested to be temporarily laid off and sent to unemployment to help get them through this difficult time. Currently, word is out that many childcare providers are making MORE \$\$ on unemployment, than they were while working in their classrooms, with the unemployment checks PLUS the Federal \$600 per week check. As you are aware, childcare is a ratio driven operation. Coupled with the classroom training requirements to bring on a new team member / teacher, we cannot simply bring in a 'sub' or, have more children per class because we don't have enough teachers.

I would like to see "HAZZARD PAY" paid out to our teachers and team whom ARE showing up to work every day. I feel very strongly that our teachers, leadership members, chefs, and team should receive \$600 per week (at least) for continuing to show up and care for the children in the state of MN. I implore you to make the acting teachers and caregivers in the state of Minnesota a priority! Without them, the Tier 1 & 2 employees will never be able to continue their jobs.

Kindly,

Tonya Holt

Primrose School of Woodbury

10350 City Walk Drive | Woodbury, MN 55129

Phone: 651.731.5333

Cell: 612.743.8934

Email: tonyah@primrosewoodbury.com

www.PrimroseWoodbury.com

I would like to submit the following message as written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing on April 16. Thank you.

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Mary O'Brien and I am writing you today asking that you hear my story.

I work for Mille Lacs County in central Minnesota as an Eligibility Worker. My main job duties are to determine healthcare eligibility for Medical Assistance and MNCare. As you know, there are many flaws with the METS system. However, I am expected to work through these flaws and provide the best care I can to the clients I serve.

During this COVID-19 emergency, I am expected to be at work each and every day; my job is defined as essential. I have a 3rd grade son and worried about childcare when I learned school was closing. My son is currently enrolled in before and after care at a local child care center.

As a precaution, I contacted my school district to inquire about childcare should my chosen provider no longer be available. I was disappointed and angry at being told by the school district that they were not able to accept children who were currently NOT enrolled for childcare. Governor Walz ordered schools to provide childcare for emergency workers and I'm being told by the very people ordered to provide that care that it wasn't available.

I would like to share with you my gratitude for the director, teachers and other staff at my son's childcare center, Bright Child Child Development Center. The director assured me that the center would remain open unless ordered to close by the Governor. I was assured that my son would be remain in a stable, safe, loving environment while I was at work. That knowledge of having consistent, stable care for my child during a worldwide pandemic relieved a large amount of stress for myself as well as my husband.

I beg you to ensure the providers giving my son the stability he needs during this crisis the respect and resources needed to continue providing excellent care. The importance to stable care is of utmost importance to my family.

Thank you for your time.

Mary O'Brien
29092 115th Circle NW
Princeton MN 55371
mary.obrien.413@gmail.com

Major Concerns:

- Our organization is bleeding 25k per week in lost tuition revenue.
- We have had to furlough ½ our staff.
- We are a self-pay UI organization our reserves will be drained if our account isn't forgiven.
- As a non-profit, small business I don't have a profit margin. Every dollar is invested back into the organization's teachers and students.
- I need operating capital to stay open.
- I am anticipating a baby boom as a result of COVID-19. Program closures will exacerbate the lack of infant care.

Jamie Bonczyk, MA
(She/Her/Hers)
Executive Director
www.hopkinselc.com
952-988-5050
Find us on [Facebook](#).

Check out what parents
have to say about us <https://youtu.be/EwiGQR51sIY>

Hopkins Early Learning Center

in partnership with families, aims to create an environment that provides the security, love and stimulation to help every child make sense of the world in their own way.

I would like to submit the following message as written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing on April 16th.

Dear Committee Members-

My name is Megan Zierden and I am an elementary teacher for the Pequot Lakes School District. My husband, Joe, is the Public Works Director for the City of Breezy Point. During this COVID-19 crisis, we have both had to work and have been dependent on continuing to bring our youngest daughter to daycare at Little People in order to do so. We are considered essential workers and as stewards of taxpayers, there really isn't an option to just stop working.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Megan

Joe & Megan Zierden
32209 First Circle
Breezy Point, MN 56472
218-330-058

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Karolann Jurgens, and I am a working mother of 2 young children. Due to the current COVID-19 situation, I am working from home collecting invoice payments for my company, and would like to express the importance of Daycare to not only me, but my children as well.

My children attend Sunshine Station Child Care in Rockford, MN. They are ages 6 and 4, and require structure and stability for day to day tasks to keep them focused, and on the correct learning path's so that they do not fall behind educationally. We are working with them at home for distant learning, but they connect better with their childcare providers; as they understand that Karrie and her team, are not only their daily caretakers, but also their teachers. They would not be where they are today mentally, emotionally, and educationally, without the care and dedication of the Sunshine Station staff.

I would not be able to complete my daily work tasks, if they were forced to stay home because of a daycare closure, let alone educationally keep my children on track. I could not stress enough, the importance Sunshine Station has on our daily structure. They are more then just our "routine"; they truly are family and essential to our daily lives!

Sincerely,

Karolann Jurgens
612 Sunset St.
Buffalo, MN 55313

Rachael Anderson
35309 Maple Lane
Crosslake MN, 56442
(785) 313-2731
rachaelsjohnson@hotmail.com

April 15, 2020

Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Committee Members,

My husband and I own Crosslake Veterinary Hospital in Crosslake, MN. We both work as full time veterinarians and employ eleven additional full time individuals as well. When the COVID-19 crisis in Minnesota first started and schools were closed, our local daycare facility chose to follow the school system and close their doors as well. My husband and I have three young children; our oldest daughter is in kindergarten, and we have a 4-year old son and a 1-year old daughter as well. We initially found an individual to come into our home to care for our children, but we quickly came to learn that we lacked committed, consistent care that was still able to enrich our children's daily activities and continue to provide ongoing learning. At a time of mental anguish when we, as employers, are trying to make decisions on how best to keep the public and our employees safe, as well as develop new strategies to preserve Personal Protective Equipment for our human medicine counterparts, losing access to a daycare provider we have worked with for 6 years was devastating.

We then sought help from a daycare facility, Little People Learning Center, in nearby Pequot Lakes. Thankfully, Little People was there to not only provide a stable, warm environment for our three children, but helped facilitate distance learning for our kindergarten student and relieve an immense stressor in our lives. As our business is still open to provide 24/7 emergency care for pets in our community, we cannot express how important child care is for us. Knowing that our children are provided for every day in a professional setting who fosters learning is an immeasurable service at a time of uncertainty.

Warm regards,
Rachael Anderson

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express support for childcare providers in the State of MN. Child care services are essential for those who work outside the home, which has been made more apparent during the COVID-19 crisis. Myself and husband are essential workers and have been able to remain working during this unprecedented time. I currently provide mental health services in Central Minnesota, while my husband is in Law Enforcement. Having consistent childcare that is safe and structured, while also assisting with our children's distance learning plan has been truly essential for us to continue some normalcy, in an effort to support our own family financially, developmentally, and educationally. Child care in MN will continue to be essential when we return to our "new normal," and therefore I am requesting that the Committee allocate the necessary and adequate resources to our child care system to ensure the delivery of high quality care that all children deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stephanie Silgjord, LICSW
13148 Cty 33
Grey Eagle, MN 56336

Dear Committee member,

My name is Sara Hudson and my 2 children attend sunshine station childcare. Both my children started child care outside the home due to our nanny being called to her other PCA job full time during this crisis. As a mother my job is to provide stability to my children for their mental health. For my 6 year old that is structure, he needs school and learns better when he know what to expect that is keeping to his "normal" routine. Sunshine station has provided that to him, he knows what to expect daily and the routine he has there. Both my kids have entered into this setting when their lives were out of their normal and it has in turn given both of them the stability that they needed while allowing me the opportunity to continue to provide for them. Both my partner and I are continuing to work, my role has changed to remote but them being in a childcare setting has allowed me to do the needed conference calls without interruption and focus on my work in data marketing. My partner is an essential worker as a full time lead mechanic. They not only love and provide my children a caring environment when I have to be away from them but they also continue to help them grow educationally. My 7month old is learning sign language and is thriving in an environment that is teaching him daily. My 6 year old who is in first grade is able to continue to have his needs and distance learning addressed and is thriving in this due to their dedicated work and commitment to our children.

Thank you
Sara Hudson
613 Sunset st
Buffalo MN 55313

Sara Hudson | SmartBase Solutions
Associate Account Coordinator

Dear committee members,

My name is Kaitlyn Alain. I am an Orthodontic Assistant/Financial coordinator at Cambridge Pine City Orthodontics. I am the only person physically in the office during the "Stay at Home" order and see all of our emergency patients. My husband is also an essential worker. Without our daycare being open, we could not go to work daily.

It means everything to my family and community to have child care during these trying times. Without it, I would not have an income for my family. I would no longer have assistance with my kindergartener's school work and all of the Orthodontic patients that have emergencies would not have assistance. I think it is incredibly crucial that my kids are able to go to daycare and have a somewhat normal routine. We are so thankful their daycare is still open.

Thank you so much, we are so appreciative.

Kaitlyn Alain

763-568-0158
7486 Davenport Road
Princeton, Mn 55371

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Kelly Spray and I am a Family Nurse Practitioner in the Pequot Lakes, MN clinic. My husband is a teacher for the Pequot Lakes School District. I am currently continuing to work in clinic providing care for patients and will also be likely be deployed to a hospital setting as well. My husband is working from home currently trying to manage his class of 150 math students as well as teaching our second grader and preschooler their class work. We also have an 18 month toddler that we are sending to Little People Learning Center a few days per week at least. It is very important and essential for us to be able to send him to a stable and consistent center for during this time. My husband is unable to do his work from home with caring for a toddler. Our daycare center is essential for us to be able to continue to serve the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Spray', with a small dot at the end.

Kelly Spray

1608 Cherokee Trail SW
Pequot Lakes, MN 56472
(320)250-0945

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Nickie Smith. My husband Gavin and myself both have been deemed as “essential workers” during the COVID-19 crisis. I am an Accounting Manager at KFI Engineering, PC. Gavin is a Maintenance Manager at G.O. Fresh. G.O. Fresh provides freshly chopped and packaged fruit and vegetables to schools, restaurants, and grocery stores. We both choose to live in Buffalo and commute into St. Paul and Minneapolis for work.

It’s extremely important to us that our 17 month old daughter continues to have a stable daycare during this uncertain time. She is constantly learning new things every day. By continuing with her “normal” weekly schedule, by going to daycare she can continue to receive the care she needs while we are both working.

We would like you to submit the message as a written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing on April 16th.

Thank you,

Nickie and Gavin Smith
3290 State Hwy 55 SE
Buffalo, MN 55313

Hello and happy Thursday!

I just wanted to say how grateful I am that my son has been able to attend his normal daycare during the pandemic. I work as a Court Operation Associate with the Sherburne County Courts and my husband is a Sergeant with the Wright County Sheriff's Office, we could not be more thankful for the staff at Bright Child in Princeton for remaining open and continuing care for our son. As a first time parent who experienced a few miscarriages before our son was born and because of our work we are very selective of who watches our son so we would not have been comfortable bringing him somewhere else during this time.

Thank you for your consideration.
Jessica Gongoll

Dear Committee Members-

My name is Kristen Gabrielson and I teach at Pequot Lakes High School. During this time of distance learning it has been a great relief to know that I can bring my 14 month old daughter to her daycare center so that I can focus on my work to make this situation as easy as possible for my students. Having my daughter's center open takes a worry off my shoulders and I know she is taken care of during the day. I pray her center can stay open as I know I will not be as successful at my job if I am running around the house taking care of a 14 month old.

This is my written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing on April 16th.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristen Gabrielson
30694 Skylark Lane
Merrifield, MN 56465

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Emily and I am a Registered Nurse working as a Psychiatry Nursing Manager and with COVID-19 crisis my job has only gotten busier. Having a great, safe and consistent child care for my twin girls at this time means everything to me! As a nurse and a mother I often feel conflicted on making sure I am not choosing my patients over my family and visa versa. During this crisis I can't even find the right words to explain how much it means to me knowing that my girls are with the only people I trust. I unfortunately don't have any family in the area who could help watch the girls if they couldn't go to daycare. My husband works in Telecommunications so we need our daycare to help us both do good work.

Thank you,

Emily Linscott, RN
Psychiatry Nursing Manager
Central MN Mental Health Center
Buffalo, Monticello & St. Cloud
Main Office Ph: (763)-682-4400
Elinscott@cmmhc.com

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Kayla Frame and I am a Director of Nursing at a rural Skilled Nursing Facility in Central MN. My two children who are 4 and 8 years old attend daycare Monday through Friday so I am able to manage my facility. It is especially crucial at this time to have daycare available consistently, not only for myself, but also for my employees. Without daycares almost 50% of my healthcare employees would not be able to work when needed. Our residents and other staff would suffer due to this. We are anticipating an even greater need for healthcare workers as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to climb in numbers.

I would also like to add that with distance learning occurring, if we do not have that extra support, from daycare providers assisting with this during the day there is really no way for parents to be able to help their children and help with the pandemic. If/when it is in this area I anticipate working even more hours than I currently am and I will expect my employees to do the same. This will require an even greater need than there already is.

Best regards,

Kayla Frame
23317 Fir Street
Sebeka, MN 56477

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Kourtney Jurek, my child attends the early childhood center Bright Child located in Princeton, MN. During this current crisis it has provided great peace of mind being able to continue having quality consistent childcare. I have relied heavily on them maintaining open as I am a neonatal nurse and during this crisis it has been essential for me to continue working. Children thrive on consistency and I have been truly thankful that childcare has been one less stress for our family during this crazy time.

I would like to submit this message as written testimony for the Early Childhood Committee hearing.

Sincerely,

Kourtney Jurek
14517 316th Ave NW
Princeton, MN 55371