



Office of Representative Gene Pelowski, Jr.
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 15, 2024

Dear Chair Pelowski and Members of the House Higher Education Committee,

For most Minnesotans, a college education remains one of the most reliable pathways to the middle class. However, a myriad of barriers, like accessibility and affordability, often hinder students from obtaining a degree. For the one-in-five college students who are parents, these barriers are exacerbated by Minnesota's childcare crisis, making it nearly impossible to juggle the demands of work, school, and family.

We urge you to support HF 3887, which will help establish Head Start programs on community college campuses across Minnesota. Your support is crucial to removing these barriers that impact student parents.

Childcare is Unaffordable and Inaccessible for Student Parents

Across Minnesota, childcare is unaffordable for most families, and even more so for student parents. We have the country's fourth-highest infant care costs; families currently spend 21% of their income on childcare for one infant (the federal government recommends spending no more than 7%). According to data from the Education Trust¹ a student parent would need to work 49 hours per week, on average, to cover child care and tuition costs at a four-year institution in Minnesota. This burden is even more unreasonable and unacceptable at community colleges, where more than 50% of students are eligible for Pell Grants.

In addition to affordability, access to quality child care is also a pervasive issue. Many Minnesota families encounter years-long wait lists to childcare centers or find themselves driving across

¹ Williams, B., Bitar, J., Polk, P., Nguyen, A., Montague, G., Gillispie, C., Waller, A., Tadesse, A., & Elliott, K. C. (2023, September 11). For student parents, the biggest hurdles to a higher education are costs and finding child care. The Education Trust.
<https://edtrust.org/resource/for-student-parents-the-biggest-hurdles-to-a-higher-education-are-costs-and-finding-child-care/>

counties to get their children enrolled. The Head Start program could provide more community college students with affordable access to campus childcare. Today, only four Minnesota community colleges have such a partnership (Alexandria Technical College, Pine Tech College, Minnesota State Community and Technical College - Detroit Lakes, and Northland Community College - Thief River Falls). And yet, we know it works. Access to affordable childcare, particularly services offered on college campuses, has been associated with enhanced persistence and completion rates among college students who are also parents.²³

Bringing Head Start to Campus Will Boost College Completion

A collaboration between community colleges and Head Start programs is highly advantageous and yields a triple bottom line: it assists student parents in advancing their education, ensures a nurturing environment for children, and will develop the childcare workforce in Minnesota by creating space on campus where childcare providers can get the practicum experience they need to complete their education.

We strongly encourage your support for HF 3887, as it will allocate startup funds to initiate the collaboration between Minnesota community colleges and the Head Start program, thus extending these opportunities to additional colleges statewide. This partnership aligns with a nationwide initiative and benefits from the guidance of experts from the National Head Start Association and the Association of Community College Trustees. This legislation will facilitate greater access to college education for Minnesota's community college students, empowering them toward economic stability.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad
ISAISH

Mike Dean
Northstar Prosperity

Clare Sanford
Minnesota Childcare Association

Cisa Keller
ThinkSmall

John Runningen
LeadMN - College Students Connecting for Change

² DeMario, Mary Ann M. 2017. "Outcomes of Monroe Community College Student Parents Who Used the Campus Child Care Center vs. Those Who Didn't, Fall 2006 - Fall 2014. Unpublished Overview of Research Findings."

³ Reichlin Cruse, Lindsey, Jessica Milli, Susana Contreras-Mendez, Tessa Holtzman, and Barbara Gault. 2019. Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education: National and State Estimates of the Costs and Benefits of Single Mothers' Educational Attainment to Individuals, Families, and Society. Report, IWPR #R600. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

<<https://iwpr.org/iwprissues/student-parent-success-initiative/investing-in-single-mothers-higher-education-state/>>.



MINNESOTA HEAD START ASSOCIATION
ESTABLISHED IN 1987

April 15, 2024

Representative Nathan Coulter
569 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Rob Kupec
3101 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155


The MN Head Start Association (MHSA), representing Head Start programs throughout Minnesota, is writing to express its appreciation to the committee for its work on HF3887/SF3806, which provides funding to participate in the Kids on Campus Initiative.

MHSA supports the author's amendment to clarify that this initiative will include coordination with MHSA and local Head Start programs to increase work already occurring to locate Head Start programs on MNSCU campuses.

Once again, MHSA thanks the committee for its commitment to advancing early childhood education opportunities, and we eagerly anticipate the impact of this collaborative effort to support Minnesota's most at-risk families.

Sincerely,

Kraig Gratke
Executive Director
Minnesota Head Start Association



Representative Gene Pelowski, Jr.
Chair, Higher Education Finance and Policy
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 16, 2024

Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition, we are writing to express our enthusiastic support for H.F. 3887, expressing our strong support for the bill relating to higher education and the provision of matching funds for childcare programs. We believe that investing in childcare facilities on college campuses is a vital step towards ensuring equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

The proposed appropriation of funds, as outlined in the bill, demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing the challenges faced by many students with young children who struggle to balance their academic pursuits with the responsibilities of childcare. By partnering with the National Head Start Association and the Association of Community College Trustees to establish Head Start centers on college campuses, we are not only supporting the educational needs of parents but also fostering a supportive environment conducive to the holistic development of their children.

The allocation of funds for renovating physical spaces for childcare within public higher education institutions signifies a commitment to creating inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of students. These renovations will not only enhance the accessibility and quality of childcare services but also contribute to the overall well-being and success of student-parents within the academic community.

Moreover, we commend the provision for matching funds to postsecondary institutions participating in the postsecondary childcare grant program. By leveraging federal childcare funding, including resources from the Head Start and Childcare Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs, we can maximize the impact of state investments and extend support to those institutions that serve low-income students with the greatest need.

We urge you to support this bill for the appropriation of funds to expand childcare programs in higher education. By prioritizing the needs of student-parents and their families, we uphold the values of equity and opportunity that lie at the heart of our educational system. Together, let us work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment where every student has the resources and support, they need to thrive academically and personally.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Start Early Funders Coalition
Carrie Zelin Johnson, Start Early Funders Coalition Coordinator
Allison Corrado, Public Policy Committee
Inam A., Public Policy Committee



April 11, 2024

RE: SF 3906

Dear Higher Education Senate Committee:

On behalf of partners within West Central Minnesota, we are writing in support of SF3806. Providing funding for Head Start agencies to expand their services to offer child care through local college campuses makes sense. Head Start sets the standards of high-quality care within Minnesota's early care and education system. This concept, coupled with creating child care space on Minnesota's college campuses, helps young parents, along with their children, on multiple fronts.

- College students, who are also parents, often struggle with the financial burden of child care. Providing child care through Head Start helps the parents connect with financial support, along with many other resources offered through the Head Start program.
- Providing child care on college campuses cuts down on transportation costs and logistical frustrations for the parents.
- Children of college students have better access to high quality child care that supports their development, as their parents are improving the family's economic outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity and consideration!
Sincerely,

Nancy Jost
Director of Early Childhood

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