

Representative Dave Pinto
Minnesota House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee
February 7, 2022

Dear Chair Pinto and Committee Members,

The undersigned organizations are in support of the Child Care Assistance COVID absent day waivers contained in HF2927. Children, families, and providers have been and continue to be subject to continuing and multiple quarantine periods where children are not able to attend child care. HF2927 temporarily reinstates flexibilities previously in place during the Peacetime Emergency which allowed Child Care Assistance payments to continue when children were excluded from care due to COVID infection and quarantines.

The Child Care Assistance absent day waivers included in HF2927 hold families and providers harmless for such COVID related absences. They prevent low-income families from being charged absent day fees during COVID isolation/quarantine, and they help to support provider revenue stability. Quarantines for young children continue to wreak havoc on families, often causing quarantine periods of up to 21 days at a time, and hit many families over and over again.

The waivers in this legislation are temporary and retroactive to November 1, 2021, tracking to the time when Omicron started causing massive disruption to child care. These waivers would allow providers to receive payment for COVID-related absent days during this time, which would in turn allow any COVID-related absent days previously charged to families during this period to be removed from their balance sheets. These waivers will provide relief and some certainty for providers and families as they continue to deal with unexpected viral variants and while vaccines are still not available for children under age 5.

Up until early January 2022 it was a child care licensing requirement that unvaccinated children (a huge percentage of those in licensed care, since 5-11 year olds were only approved for vaccine in November 2021 and no children under 5 are yet approved) be quarantined for a minimum of 10 days upon exposure. During this time many families endured, and continue to endure, multiple quarantines. Exclusion of positive cases remains a licensing requirement, and licensed providers continue to be expected to follow still-restrictive federal, local, and tribal guidance (to the best of their ability) regarding COVID quarantines in order to receive federal Child Care Stabilization Grants.

The Child Care Assistance waivers in HF 2927 would temporarily reinstate some supports providers and families relied on earlier in the pandemic, helping both as they continue to balance maintaining financial stability with the health and safety of children and educators.

We respectfully urge these waivers to be reinstated as quickly as possible, and with an end date of June 2023 to account for unexpected COVID waves that may still lie ahead of us.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Child Care Association
Northside Achievement Zone
Center for Inclusive Child Care
West Central Initiative Foundation
Minnesota Head Start Association
Children's Defense Fund Minnesota
Minnesota Budget Project
Minnesota School Age Care Alliance

Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition
People Serving People
Start Early Funders Coalition
YWCA of Minneapolis
Minnesota Alliance of YMCAs
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis
ISAIAH/Kids Count on Us
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children