



March 7, 2022

Testimony in support of the expansion of industries eligible for Dual Training Grants.

My name is Anne Lindseth, Economic Assistance Division Director with Beltrami County Health and Human Services. I oversee our Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) eligibility processing and manage the CCAP budget for Beltrami County. I also served as the Co-Chair of the Bemidji Area Rural Child Care Innovation Project through First Children's Finance, as well as being a parent of a young child who goes to family childcare in Bemidji, MN.

The most recent gap analysis completed by First Children's Finance in November 2020 covering Beltrami County, showed a need of over 1,000 additional childcare slots. This has worsened with the pandemic. In 2018 we had 98 family child care providers which has reduced to 80 family providers in 2022. We have seen some growth in child care centers going from 7 in 2018 to 9 in 2022 but demand continue to outweigh availability in Beltrami County.

We have reached a crisis level when it comes to infant childcare slots. Parents have reported more and more that they are needing to leave the workforce because they cannot find childcare for their infant. CCAP funds are not being expended in Beltrami County because eligible parents are unable to secure licensed or legally non-licensed providers. The influx of legislated funds to CCAP does no good if there are no providers to pay. From experience, a Child Support Specialist left my division just last month to stay home as she was unable to find infant care.

With the current state of the economy in Beltrami County, much like the rest of the nation, we are experiencing a labor force shortage. We are seeing businesses with reduced hours or closings due to this shortage. Lack of childcare is one of the reasons that individuals are either leaving the labor force or not re-entering it. Employers are making an effort to entice any and all to the labor market and the lack of child care is a huge barrier.

The Dual Training Grants have been available to in demand industries and are a large benefit to employers and employees. These in demand sectors will not have the labor force to expand or even continue without a heavy investment in childcare in the state of MN.

Funding toward programs like CCAP or even startup funds are not enough to support this industry. Childcare needs to develop training pipelines much like the in demand

sectors that the Dual Training Grants already support. This would work well in childcare centers that have requirements for teachers to have certain levels of education. These Childcare centers are competing with schools who pay more and the centers need to invest in their current employees when possible. This would allow centers an opportunity to provide training with financial support, as we know that many childcare centers are not making a large profit.

Childcare needs every available tool when it is critical that we get our parents into the workforce for both their financial security but also the larger economies stability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Lindseth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Lindseth  
Economic Assistance Division Director  
Beltrami County Health and Human Services  
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