



Minnesota Child Care Provider
Information Network
PO Box 1136
Prior Lake, MN 55372
651-636-1989
www.mccpin.org

The mission of the Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN) is to support, promote and strengthen the profession of licensed family child care, thereby enriching the lives of providers, children, families, and communities.

April 1, 2022

HF4570 as Amended - Voluntary prekindergarten obsolete language removed.

Dear Committee Chair and Committee members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 26 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers. I also served as the MCCPIN representative on the Family Child Care Task Force years which is where the basis for this position was supported.

I'm testifying to share MCCPIN's concerns and opposition to the proposed Pre-K plan as presented by bill HF4570.

MCCPIN has met with MDE, listened carefully to what the plan is and have expressed our great concern for this plan.

We have also been connected on a national platform of advocates since early last fall regarding the federal actions of Build Back Better. These advocates strongly support mixed-delivery and all care settings. Most have stated the concern about the BBB degree requirement and other aspects to the proposal. MCCPIN separated from NAFCC due to BBB views.

I grew up in Iowa, I'm well familiar with The Field of Dreams. Went to college near there. I love baseball. However, building fields of dreams such as this bill will continue to expand has to stop. Funding programs who determine who gets to benefit and expecting parents and children to come does not meet the needs of our youngest children and their families. They can't do what the movie did.

As presented the HF4570 issues are:

- **Build Back Better has not passed**, and per Sen Tina Smith's office, likely will not pass
 - To base a Minnesota plan on a federal idea which isn't in place is highly questionable
 - Minnesota needs to create and support what is currently best for Minnesota, not what 'might be'



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- Even if it passed, Minnesota would have the opportunity to make a decision on implementation
- These discussions need to take place in a fully transparent setting with all options on the table
- **BBB set direction for MDE not to be the overseer of the programs due to the concern of school not supporting mixed deliver. The percentages presented of 40% school, 30% Head Start and 30% child care is concerning:**
 - This is almost a full shift away from the current percentages
 - This shifts children to schools and away from childcare
 - “childcare” is a mix of center and Licensed Family Child Care
 - There is not a requirement that these percentages be followed, they are guidelines
 - There is no incentive for the overseeing school district to ensure these are followed
 - School districts, like most entities, will proceed with what is the normal and known; for them it will be schools
 - School districts frequently do not currently recognize child care as a quality setting and will continue to marginalize our value
- **Degree requirement, though with a 6-year implementation, will eliminate and exclude many Early Childhood Educators in child care settings**
 - Minorities will be marginalized as this is an inequitable standard. We currently have a crisis in ECE with minority representation in care providers, this will exasperate the situation.
 - Current care providers working full-time do not have the flexibility to obtain a 4-degree. Paid time off from work, financial supports for education are limited, many are parents of young children complicating time away from work and family to obtain this degree
 - New providers will be restricted as they can’t apply for exception to the BA as they will not have been in the field long enough.
 - BA degrees are over-valued to prepare young children for school and life. There are many quality classifications for providers to ensure they have the tools to best prepare children: Parent Aware which this state has invested heavily, ECE certificates/diplomas, AA degrees, Accreditation, Montessori certificates, etc. have all proven to prepare children.



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- There are no studies which support a BA only degree. BA's are the known standard in schools, hence why it is comfortable to the MDE system. There is a sense of disrespect to those who do not have a degree without understanding skills present.
- There are no complete studies which evaluate what setting children who are 'not prepared' for school are coming from! To make a leap and assumption that only BA degrees can prepare is not supported.
- **Mixed delivery will not be in existence as programs will not be available.**
 - None of the research says that children need to be in a school/classroom to build to success.
 - Ultimate impact will lead to long term limits of choice for families
 - Families need a variety of choice, including pre-school settings in the broad definition, not just schools
 - Children will be removed from child care settings leading to an even larger child care crisis
 - Programs such as centers and licensed family child care will not be able to sustain their businesses and therefore less choice

We ask legislators stop this plan. Ultimately, the presented structure will lead to families having limited choice and children will not have full support to grow and flourish.

Please support children and families by funding Pathways I scholarships and CCAP.

- These fundings have proven to meet children and families where they are. It does not build programs which then distribute the wealth to who can make it to the program.
- \$11,000/child would have a great impact on giving parents shopping dollars to go to the setting which meets their needs. Cost of a 4-year-old for a full year in my program would be approx. \$8,000 for over 2,000 hours, not 800+ of Early Childhood setting.
- Non-traditional hours, and non-school hours can be met by Pathways I and CCAP. To expect children and families to just participate in the few hours a school offers does not cover their overall needs.
- Child care, whether center or Licensed Child Care along with many other non-school programs can meet family and children's needs.



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Lean on the experts in the field of Early Childhood Education, those who have been providing positive settings for decades. Schools have not been meeting these needs of these littles for as long as other settings have been.

Frequently the statement is made that children are not ready for school. There are children who are not ready for school, however what is missing is understanding what standard is being used to measure this statement and lacking is that there is no study which shows where they are coming from. Solutions are constantly being made without truly knowing the problem.

The overreaching message by the House and administration is that FFCs are not quality nor supported. Efforts such as Pathways II, this bill, and the appointment of a controversial person to the Ombudsperson position lead to perceptions that LFCCs are being marginalized and disrespected.

We need to stop building programs with Pathways II and school fund expecting families & children come to them. The state needs to financially support families and children where they are and create support for all settings, not set up funding streams and directions which will lead to the demise of categories of programs such as Family Child Care. Intended and unintended consequences of bills such as this need to be looked at critically first, then plans implemented.

Please support families, children, and ALL Early Childhood Educators, not this bill.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham
MCCPIN Public Policy Chairperson

Michael V. Ciresi
Founding Partner,
Ciresi Conlin L.L.P. (Chair)

Ken Powell
Retired Chairman and CEO,
General Mills (Vice Chair)

Jan Kruchoski
Principal (retired)
CliftonLarsonAllen L.L.P.
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Tim Penny
President,
Southern Minnesota Initiative
Foundation (Secretary)

Terri Barreiro
Co-founder, Impact Hub MSP

Kathy Cooney
Retired Executive Vice President
& CAO, HealthPartners

Brett Edelson
Chief Executive Officer
UnitedHealthcare of MN, ND, SD

Robbin Johnson
Former President,
Cargill Foundation

Arthur J. Rolnick
Senior Fellow,
Hubert H. Humphrey
School of Public Affairs,
University of Minnesota

Fred Senn
Founding Partner,
Fallon Worldwide

March 31, 2022

Dear Members of the Education Finance Committee:

I am writing to express our concerns with H.F. 4570. We acknowledge and appreciate that the Walz Administration has made improvements over previous Universal Pre-K proposals, specifically by targeting funding (at least at the outset) and making a stronger effort to provide for mixed delivery, but we still do not believe that Universal Pre-K is the right approach for Minnesota.

While this proposed Pre-K program is more like our homegrown Early Learning Scholarships, it still falls short of giving families maximum choice and flexibility; it still maintains steep barriers to participation for community-based child care programs; and, for the child care programs able to overcome those barriers, it subjects them to another layer of requirements and associated administrative burdens. In light of this, we continue to have serious concerns that the mixed delivery provisions in this proposal do not go far enough and are not strong enough to overcome the very serious danger of undermining the supply and quality of child care available to infants and toddlers.

We have many questions about how this proposal would be implemented and about the consequences it would provoke, but our primary question is “What problem is this proposal addressing?” Minnesota already has a mixed delivery, birth-to-five, quality-linked funding stream in Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships. The time, energy, and resources allocated in this proposal could be put to better use improving and expanding the Scholarship program.

At a minimum, before the Legislature proceeds further down the path to having a separate Pre-K funding stream, we would encourage the committee to look at the approach being taken by the city of St. Paul, which after an extensive community engagement process to design a Pre-K program for a referendum proposal settled on a design for a system very much like Pathway I Scholarships. Our understanding is that the blueprint for Spark St. Paul does the following: uses a simple, unified application/enrollment system for all providers; builds on the familiar Parent Aware system as a quality measure; allows parents, not bureaucrats to direct resources; and administers funding through a neutral entity (not the school district).

Our organization has ties to the MN Early Learning Foundation, which first piloted Early Learning Scholarships with private funding as part of an applied research project to develop ways of using early education to address achievement gaps at scale. In that work Scholarships filled a simple function – we needed a way to pay for programs when families couldn’t. We could have directly funded programs for parents to choose from, as is the approach in HF4570, but we were instead

extremely deliberate when we gave parents the power of picking the winners in the system by having Scholarship dollars follow children.

From the beginning this choice has been the most significant source of opposition to the Scholarship model. The fact is that each type of provider in the system wants some kind of advantage or assurance. Our perspective has always been that instead of brokering which provider types get resources through a political process with legislators or bureaucrats picking winners and losers, it is far better to have parents hold the power and for them to broker the allocation of resources. All of the various types of providers, if allowed to compete to serve parents on an even playing field, thrive with this approach because we know parents love Head Start, they love family child care providers, they love centers and they love school programs. We see this mixed delivery system with Scholarships, and we already know it can work because it has for the last 10 years.

We appreciate the growing commitment to more fully funding early care and education. As you continue your work we ask that you consider simpler ways to creating an equitable system of early care that keeps children and parents at the center.

Sincerely,



Ericca Maas
Executive Director
Close Gaps by 5