

February 18, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today to voice my opposition to **HF2655**

I have been a childcare provider for 23 years in the New Brighton, MN area. I have a BA in Psychology and MA in Education, with a certification in Montessori Education from St. Catherine University in Saint Paul. I have a fully functioning Montessori Preschool Program for children when they reach 2 ½ years. I have dedicated my career to caring for and educating the youngest of our MN citizens. HF1278 is problematic because of its incorrect assumptions about childcare and because of the adverse economic impact it will have on hard-working childcare providers statewide.

The children in my care are engaged in lively activities throughout the day with frequent educational field trips away from the daycare. In some of the literature proposing that universal preschool be enacted, I have seen home childcare programs characterized as mere holding tanks for preschool children. This notion is offensive and inaccurate. Having children attend highly structured, populated public schooling one year earlier is not the answer to a better preschool education.

I (as well as many other childcare providers) have kept my childcare program open throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, risking illness to myself and my family members. But after this sacrifice and effort, I am faced with the MN legislature's decision to cut me and other dedicated family child care providers out of the state's long term educational solution. If the attendance of preschool children between the ages of 4-5 were to be eliminated, my business would be effectively cut by one third. I have already suffered a loss of income due to the pandemic, and I am not sure I would be able to continue caring for children infants to three years of age.

Please do not treat your MN child care providers as if we have not been highly effective in caring for MN preschoolers. I can tell you based on the positive feedback from over a generation of parents and based on my conversations with others in this field who have heard the same from their parents, that we certainly have. I would like you to consider bringing us into rather than removing us from the solution of educating young children. The use of the term *mixed delivery* is being used in many conversations. However, if Licensed Family Child Care cannot equitably participate, it stops being mixed delivery. Our expertise and commitment to children make it very much worth your efforts to include us in educating future generations of Minnesota children.

Sincerely, Rita Iacarella (Owner of Rita Montessori Preschool and Childcare Program)