

Mr. Chair and committee members:

I have been a family child care provider for the past 36 years and recently had to retire for health reasons. I have worked closely with hundreds of parents and I know very well that if their choices of where to send their pre-K children are further removed from them they will be extremely upset. This pandemic has already depleted our supply of qualified early childhood programs and parents are currently struggling to find Licensed Family Child Care, which is a choice many parents want!

I am writing in opposition to HF2655 which expands voluntary preschool and sets new standards for these specific parts of the pre-school system. Modeling this program after the federal Build Back Better bill is a failure to look specifically at what is needed in Minnesota. The Build Back Better bill has not passed, is under debate, and has been criticized by national cohorts for the issues related to mixed delivery.

The phrase *mixed delivery* is being utilized to appear to include all settings, however, the system being established will not be sustainable to truly be mixed delivery. The standards set are focused on a school-based model.

Licensed Family Child Care is a critical service for pre-school age children and the impact of this program must be looked at carefully.

**At issue:**

#### **Test/evaluation at the beginning to determine ability to provide services**

- Unknown what this method will be
- Minnesota has a QRIS which has been developed and implemented in many methods including a pre-k program during the summer of 2021.

#### **Degree only standard to provide services to be implemented**

- What degree?
- How to sustain supply of service providers?
- Eliminates many qualified Early Childhood Educators/programs (i.e. Family Child Care, Parent Aware rated, Montessori trained, CDA's, Accredited to name a few)
- The higher education system cannot support the full influx of those needing a degree
- Many providers (Center and Family Child Care) would have an extremely difficult time obtaining a degree in the timeline and working at the same time

#### **A clear path to school only programing**

- 30% childcare does not identify center vs family childcare. Greater Minnesota relies heavily on Family Child Care and will not be able to maintain having qualified settings
- The 30% childcare, 30% head start, 40% school ratio is a suggested ratio, not a requirement for a community to maintain

Setting up one more pathway to build upon which pulls 4-year-olds out of qualified child care settings will be one more loss to child care to be able to sustain their programs.

Please do not support this specific expansion of 4-year-old pre-school programming. This implementation will eventually limit settings to school-based programs, damage Family Child Care businesses and most critically, limit parent choice. Many settings can prepare these children for school with appropriate support.

Sincerely,

Diane DeMarais