

Chair Marquart and committee members, thank you for reading my testimony. My name is Ellory Roske. I live in Golden Valley and am the parent of a two-year old who was born 4 months before the pandemic began. I am testifying in favor of H.F. 3283 and expanding the dependent care credit.

I am a Human Resources Coordinator. When my son was born, I took 12 weeks of maternity leave. Six weeks was entirely unpaid and the other six weeks was considered disability leave and paid at 60% of my salary. When we placed our son in infant care at 12 weeks, we paid \$425 per week. Now that he is a toddler, we pay \$340 per week, or about \$17,000 per year. For reference, someone working full-time in a minimum wage job in Minnesota earns \$21,486.40 in a year.

As we think ahead to adding to our family, the cost of childcare is a factor with which we need to contend. With two children needing care, it would not make financial sense for me to continue to work. My take-home pay would be barely enough to make up for the cost of childcare for two children. This is a common story among so many families with young children. A friend who recently had a second child is making childcare work for the next year with grandparents available who can provide free childcare. But that is short term, and the most logical choice thereafter is for one parent to stay home.

Yet, staying at home with my children would unfortunately come at a cost to my career. If I continue working, I will have opportunities to advance in my career. If I take off 4-5 years to care for my children, I will lose those opportunities and will likely start over again when I reenter the workforce. This too is a common story for mothers. It is still very common in our society that women earn less than men. This places them in the position where their job or career is valued less than a man's, and therefore they are much more often the one tapped to stay home with children. This literally subtracts capable women with valuable gifts from our workforce. I have numerous valuable skills beyond being a mother, but I am in a position where I may not be able to use them and contribute to society because of the cost of childcare.

An increase in the dependent care credit would allow so many families more breathing room. While my choice will not be between putting food on the table or affording childcare, that is exactly the reality for so many others. Yet, taking myself completely out of the workforce for several years and then reentering at a lower level is a huge loss of income in my lifetime. Childcare costs in Minnesota are some of the highest in the nation, rivaling tuition at 4-year colleges. Minnesota parents need all the help we can get. Investing in our very youngest has incredible benefits, and investing in their parents, giving them what they need to stay in the workforce, has incredible moral and economic benefits too.

Thank you for your time.