

February 17, 2021



House Early Childhood Finance & Policy Committee

Hearing Date: 2/18/21

Bill: HF 668

Dear Chair Pinto and Committee Members,

The Minnesota Child Care Association (MCCA) would like to submit the attached parent testimony as well as our own organizational support of HF 668, a bill authorizing grants in support of child care inclusion for children with disabilities. MCCA is a statewide association representing licensed child care centers of all sizes.

Child care is difficult to access for nearly all families in Minnesota, and for children with disabilities most especially so. With child care already an economically untenable operation for many providers there are often not the resources needed to serve children requiring significant medical, physical, social, and/or cognitive support. Too often parents of children with disabilities are told that child care programs cannot serve them, leaving both parents and children with few to no options. The providers are telling the truth – this is rarely an issue of simply not wanting to serve these children, but of providers lacking both the financial and educational support resources to do so.

Child care providers already assume tremendous risk and responsibility in caring for and educating parents' most precious assets, and this only increases when children have additional needs. Providers may want to serve children with disabilities but feel they do not have the specialized training or other supports to feel confident in meeting certain medical or developmental circumstances. We already know how much we ask of providers in terms of quality service delivery with low compensation. Take on those responsibilities plus the fear of doing something wrong for a child with unique needs and it's easy to see why providers feel at a loss to meet such needs within current staffing and resources.

This bill would allow for experimentation among providers to share staff and physical resources, get substitute support while staff receive additional training, and more, with the goal of creating innovative models that can be sustained within or among groups of providers. All children deserve access to community environments with their diverse peers, and many providers wish to offer more inclusive services but need resources and guidance to do it in earnest for children with complex needs.

Please see the attached testimony from a parent at an MCCA member center. It speaks to the power of what we can do together with both the will and resources to do it.

Thank you,

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