

Daniel Rogge
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Dear Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

I am writing to urge you to do something NOW to address child care and preschool affordability in the state of Minnesota. I am a full-time working, single father of two sons and I earn \$63,000 per year pre tax. I recently applied for an Early Learning Scholarship from the organization Think Small. In response to my application I was told, and I quote, "Your annual gross income is over the income limit for the number of people in your household" and "please feel free to contest this decision" and "keep us in mind if the above (references the financial benchmarks) changes in the future."

Those words are damaging and heartless, cold and not what I perceived this great state to be. What they are saying to a struggling father is "once you lose your home, can't pay for food, childcare and preschool, resubmit your application and we might help." "We won't help you to stay out of poverty, but when you get there, give us a call!" This is unacceptable. This isn't the Minnesota I know. But it's clearly the true Minnesota currently.

The state of Minnesota has made it clear, that I am not eligible for ANY assistance. Of any kind. I thank God every day for what the boys and I have. Many, many families have less. **But, what the state has told me, denying every application for assistance I have submitted for is this: Until the boys and I reach a level of poverty, you can't help me.**

I understand there are budget restrictions. But I am using this letter as my personal plea to the state to please consider reform to this antiquated, out dated and biased system for approval for state funded programs. Per state financial benchmarks, my income suggests that I shouldn't have any problem caring for my two boys by myself. The algorithm used to determine my eligibility looks at my annual gross income (before taxes), the number of people in my household and what I pay for medical expenses/insurance.

Out of my income I pay for my mortgage. Our electricity. Our water. Our sewer. Our garbage. All services I must pay for. And I do. I also pay for food every month. I have a 4- and 6-year-old. They tend to eat a lot. And for their clothing, shoes, and other basic items they need. Add on top of that inflation. Then there is the cost of childcare. **As a full time working single father, without the help from their mother to co-parent, I'm spending \$600-\$700 a week on childcare. That's daycare and nanny help while I'm working. In addition, I have the expense of**

preschool for my youngest son, the cost? \$1,500 per month. After taxes, I take home around \$54,000.00. You do the math, it clearly doesn't add up. Ends don't meet.

My boys and I don't need much to keep what we have. What I have been fighting to keep. We just need a little help. Just a little help for God's sake. I hope this letter will reach the right eyes. I hope changes are made and made soon.

Sincerely,

Daniel Rogge