



December 13, 2022

Dear Commissioner Olson,

On behalf of Child Care Aware of Minnesota, I urge support for the expansion of the MN Dual Training Grant. We are a statewide early childhood leader driving change through partnerships to build an equitable, high-quality early care and education system that meets the needs of Minnesota's families and children.

The pandemic has greatly increased awareness about the importance of child care to the economic prosperity of our state and the overall well-being of children, families, and communities. Minnesota needs qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated early educators. Unfortunately, this field which was already struggling *prior* to the pandemic, has been dealt a tremendous blow because of it. Many if not most of our state's programs are now struggling to hire new staff, and our Licensed Family Child Care programs continue to decline.

While there are existing child care workforce supports in Minnesota, they focus on the individual early educators. The Dual Training Grant program offers an opportunity to provide direct support to our child care **programs** in their efforts to attract, retain, and improve the education of their staff.

As of 2016, only **52%** of center-based staff and **31%** of Family Child Care educators held a postsecondary degree. During the pandemic, some existing requirements were waived, resulting in staff who may already be working in child care that will need to continue their certification and degree options as these waivers are lifted.

By broadening the MN Dual Training Grant appropriation to include the child care/early education industry, more programs and early educators could have access to higher education as well as the kinds of mentoring and support that comes with such a program, resulting in more job security and program stability.

We see this as a career with many facets, and one deserving of respect and support, given the tremendous impact it has on our children, families, and communities. As such, we are hoping to see it included in the Dual Training Pipeline program in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann McCully".

Ann McCully
Executive Director
annm@childcareawaremn.org

CC: Jacquelynn Mol Sletten