

LEAD & CARE

Association of Family Child Care Professionals



Partnering with Providers, Supporting Family Child Care Businesses

Leadandcaremn.org

publicpolicy@leadandcaremn.org

April 2, 2025

RE: HF2728 (Coulter) Child care great start compensation support payments modified.

To: Children's and Family Finance and Policy

Committee Chair and members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 27 years serving children 6 weeks – 11 years and their families. I am also the current Public Policy Chairperson for Lead & Care, a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I am writing on behalf of Lead and Care to **oppose HF2728**, which aims to expand activities which qualify for Great Start Compensation dollars.

Family Child Care providers have greatly appreciated and valued the Great Start Awards. We are hopeful for this funding to continue.

Our concerns:

- We respect the centers desire to qualify for additional qualifying compensation for their support staff and hours for care staff. As much as we would embrace extended hours this doesn't fit the program intent or practical application.

The intent of the Great Start Compensation is to support those directly caring for children. To raise the 'low wages' of those doing the work.

There is a system in place to submit attendance for all programs.

There is no system in place, nor would one be easily developed, to accurately account for the tasks that are being suggested for submission.

- **Financially the budget for the GS Comp program is being greatly reduced**, without additional funding current levels cannot be supported, let alone adding significant qualifying hours = more dollars being requested = less per program distributed.

The system cannot handle these additional qualifying hours and stay significant.

Increased qualifying hours will increase award hours submission and the pie will be divided up more, leaving each program receiving less award amounts.

This will deem the award amount limited and questionable support.

- **One aspect of the Great Start Compensation for centers is that the awards are not required to compensate those whose hours were utilized to lead to the award.** If there are 10 staff whose hours are submitted to calculate the award, those 10 staff may or may not realize the benefit.

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4.2.205

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Increasing all of these hours does not lead to a guaranteed benefit for those employees which is the main goal of the program. A licensed center or certified center can distribute the dollars for recruitment or to only a few staff.

When a Family Child Care program submits hours and an award, we are the only ones who receive the dollars. Direct support for those doing the work.

Since the budget is limited and there are those who want to reach into the pot more.... There is an adjustment which can be made to the program which would free up \$\$'s to support quality programs providing care.

Certified Centers are compensated equal to a Family Child Care or Center staff caring for children. There is no comparison between these roles. <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/142c>

Adjust the compensation for Certified Centers similar to the Family Friend Neighbors/Legally unlicensed programs were not deemed equal to licensed programs. FFN/Legally unlicensed programs receive a one-time award as they are not highly regulated and cannot be rated in a quality process.

The state has consistently stated that they are focused on quality care settings and set up this compensation program to value quality care settings.

Certified centers can have 16-year-olds caring for children (FCCs/Centers cannot) and Certified settings **cannot qualify for a quality rating**. There is also a very low regulatory bar for health & safety.

The state needs to evaluate what programs they are budgetarily support and work on consistency.

Please reconsider HF2728 as it will drain more \$\$'s limiting award amounts.

Increased funding could help (it's in the budget but not passed).

Consider limiting Certified Center award amounts to be more in line with FFN which reflects the expectation the state places on quality programs.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham
373 Idaho Ave W.
St. Paul, MN 55117
Lead & Care Public Policy Chairperson



March 31, 2025

Dear Chairs West and Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee,

We are writing to express our strong support for HF 2728 modifying Great Start Compensation support payments.

As an advocate, funder and convener of early child care work, we see firsthand the critical role that early childhood educators play in shaping the development of young children. However, the compensation and workforce stability challenges within the early childhood sector continue to threaten the accessibility and quality of child care programs. HF 2728 is a necessary step in ensuring fair wages and professional recognition for early educators.

Amending the bill to clearly define "one full-time equivalent" is essential to accurately reflect the comprehensive nature of early childhood education. Early child care providers do far more than supervise children – they engage in lesson planning, ongoing training, and professional development to enhance the quality of education and care they provide. Excluding these critical responsibilities from FTE calculations could result in inequitable funding distributions and undervalue the work of early educators.

By incorporating this amendment, the legislation would: (a) ensure fair and consistent compensation by recognizing all aspects of an educator's workload, (b) strengthen workforce retention and recruitment by validating the full scope of professional responsibilities, and (c) improve program quality and child outcomes by supporting educators in their continued professional growth.

I respectfully urge you to support HF 2728 to ensure that early educators receive the recognition and compensation they deserve. Investing in early childhood education is investing in the future of our communities, and we must take every step necessary to strengthen and stabilize this vital workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie L. Lewis", written over a horizontal line.

Stephannie L. Lewis

