



April 1, 2025

Dear Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of Think Small, I am writing to express our support for HF1383. This bill aligns with Think Small's mission to advance quality care and education for children in their crucial early years, ensuring that every child is ready for kindergarten and has the opportunity to realize their full potential.

Child care affordability is a significant barrier facing Minnesota families and preventing children from having the opportunity of attending a quality early care and education (ECE) program. One of the most significant barriers facing families in Minnesota's existing system is the current eligibility cliff. Right now, families who earn just slightly above the income threshold for Early Learning Scholarships (around \$55,000 for a family of four) are unable to get any support. This abrupt cutoff creates immense financial strain and forces families into difficult decisions, such as reducing work hours or declining promotions to become eligible for support. These challenges not only undermine family stability but also limit children's access to high-quality early learning opportunities that are essential for their development.

Think Small has heard directly from families who are struggling under this system. Parents have shared stories of having their applications for Scholarships rejected because they earn a few hundred dollars too much to qualify. These stories highlight an urgent need for an approach that eliminates the benefits cliff and offers sliding scale support.

HF1383 addresses this issue by prioritizing families closest to the benefits cliff while ensuring that a wide range of families receive support proportional to their financial situation. It would also help to stabilize the child care sector by giving many more families the help they need to access and pay for quality care. These measures will help close opportunity gaps for children in families currently ineligible for help, aligning with Think Small's vision of ensuring all children are ready for kindergarten.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cisa Keller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cisa" being more prominent than the last name "Keller".

Cisa Keller  
President and CEO



# MINNESOTA BUDGET PROJECT

An initiative of  
the Minnesota Council  
of Nonprofits

April 2, 2025

Representative Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn  
Centennial Office Building  
5th Floor  
658 Cedar St.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Nolan West  
Centennial Office Building  
2nd Floor  
658 Cedar St.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Kotyza-Witthuhn and West and Members of the House Children and Families Committee:

**The Minnesota Budget Project supports the creation of Great Start Affordability Scholarships, which would lower monthly child care costs for families across Minnesota** so they are better able to find and afford child care that meets their needs.

Many families struggle with affording the cost of child care. In 2024, center-based care for an infant costs on average \$20,200 a year – that’s more than a year of undergraduate resident tuition at the University of Minnesota. Investments in affordable child care are investments in the future. Research shows that consistent, quality care can help reduce achievement gaps, increase school readiness, and lead to higher earnings and graduation rates when those children become adults. When parents can afford the child care that meets their families’ needs, they can succeed in the workforce, and employers can find and keep the workers they need to keep our economy strong.

Key features of Great Start Affordability Scholarships are that they:

- **Reduce families’ monthly child care bills.** This reduces financial burdens and strengthens a family’s ability to choose among a wider range of child care providers. Great Start Scholarships bring down the monthly costs of child care by paying child care providers directly and prospectively, which also has the benefit that providers have upfront resources to care for children.
- **Build on the current spectrum of resources to help families with the cost of care.** Great Start Affordability Scholarships would be a strong addition to current investments in child care affordability, such as Child Care Assistance, Early Learning Scholarships, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.
- **Reach more families and provide more assistance to families facing greater financial barriers.** Great Start Scholarships would be available to families with incomes above current

limits, and are for young children, for whom child care costs are higher, with infant care being the most expensive type. Scholarship amounts would be determined using a sliding scale based on family income. Families across the state could better have the resources they need to afford child care, with more modest-income families receiving more support.

Please support the creation of Great Start Affordability Scholarships. If there is any additional information I can provide that would be helpful, please feel free to contact me at [jluevano@mnbudgetproject.org](mailto:jluevano@mnbudgetproject.org) or 651-757-3065.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessie Luévano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jessie Luévano  
Policy Analyst

*The Minnesota Budget Project, an initiative of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, identifies and promotes public policies so that economic security is available to all Minnesotans, regardless of who they are or where they live.*



404 South Eighth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
[www.epc-mn.org](http://www.epc-mn.org)

March 31, 2025

Dear Members of the Children and Families Committee,

As the Education Partnerships Coalition of Minnesota, we write to express our strong support for House File 1383, which establishes the Great Start Affordability Scholarships. This crucial legislation is a significant step toward ensuring that all Minnesota families have access to high-quality early care and learning, regardless of their financial situation.

As a statewide coalition committed to ensuring that all children and youth in Minnesota have access to the education and resources they need to succeed, we believe this investment is both timely and critical in this moment where early childhood education is an issue with broad support in diverse communities across our great state.

Research consistently shows that quality early learning experiences, particularly for children from low-income backgrounds and historically marginalized communities, have a profound impact on their educational, career, and life outcomes.

In addition, a strong early childhood support ecosystem is increasingly recognized as a competitive advantage when communities and states seek to attract and develop a workforce for the future. Those that invest in early childhood education are winning this race.

By implementing a system where no Minnesota family pays more than seven percent of their annual income for early care and learning, this bill ensures that all children, from birth to kindergarten, have equitable opportunities for educational success.

Furthermore, the provisions of House File 1383 ensure continuity of care, allowing children who receive scholarships to maintain funding until kindergarten entry. The requirement for participating programs to be a part of the quality rating and improvement system further guarantees that children benefit from high-quality educational settings.

The Education Partnerships Coalition supports the bill's structured administration, ensuring families can navigate the application and renewal processes effectively.

The financial structure of the program, including advance payments to eligible providers and ensuring payments are based on enrollment rather than attendance, is a thoughtful approach that supports both families and early learning providers. Additionally, the Great Start Affordability Scholarship Account ensures responsible and sustainable funding management.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota's children and families.

Sincerely, the Education Partnerships Coalition, including:

Austin Aspires \* Children First (West Metro) \* C2C (Rochester) \* Generation Next (Twin Cities) \* Healthy Community Initiative (Northfield & Faribault) \* Northside Achievement Zone (Minneapolis) \* RiseUp Partnership (Red Wing) \* Saint Paul Promise \* United Way of Central Minnesota (Greater St. Cloud)

**Our children succeed in school and in life. Our communities thrive. Our state is equitable and prosperous for ALL.**



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 the proposed legislation HF1383 ensuring no Minnesota family pays more than 7% of their income toward child care costs. This critical reform will help make child care more affordable and accessible for families while supporting stability for early child care providers.

As an early child care advocate at Greater Twin Cities United Way, I have seen firsthand the financial burden that child care costs place on working families. As a self-described "super aunt," I have served as the stopgap for my nieces and nephews when my siblings' child care assistance was exhausted, and the weekly balance exceeded their ability to pay forcing them to make difficult choices between child care, housing, food and other essential expenses.

Unfortunately, my siblings are not alone. The average cost of infant care in the state of Minnesota is \$22,569 or \$1,881 per month, which is the third highest in the nation behind Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. Nearly 20% of a family's median income is dedicated to infant care. This cost is only affordable for about **6% of Minnesota families**, under a standard federal measure of child care affordability (i.e., 7% cap). By capping child care costs at 7% of household income, HF1383 with federal affordability benchmarks and ensures no family is disproportionately burdened by child care expenses.

Early childhood education is a crucial investment in our workforce, economy, and future generations. By passing HF1383, we can ensure that more families have access to the child care they need while strengthening the entire early education system. I respectfully urge you to support this important reform and advocate for its swift implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Stephannie L. Lewis

Associate Vice President, Advocacy & Community Impact