

**Testimony**  
**House Bill 1416 – Department of Human Services**  
**House Human Services Committee**  
**Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman**  
**February 2, 2021**

Chairman Weisz, members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Jessica Thomasson, Executive Policy Director for the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here today to register the Department's support for House Bill 1416.

The Department of Human Services is working across systems whenever possible to improve stability and prevent crises, to promote and support recovery and well-being, to support workforce needs with access to childcare, and to align programs for maximum return on investment. We recognize that any investments we make in support of young families and in children's earliest years are both cost and outcome effective.

At DHS our approach is based on the knowledge that children are best able to realize their potential if they have access to quality early childhood experiences. We also know that investing in early childhood supports state workforce needs because parents are more able to productively engage in the workforce when they know their children are well. Our staff is working every day to find efficiencies and improve alignment between existing programs and services that serve young families. We believe the proposal outlined in HB1416 will further that work. Further aligning the work of the state's early childhood professionals by transitioning the functions of the Office of Early Learning from DPI to DHS will give greater attention and focus to the needs of young families and their children.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.