

Testimony of Laura Lacher
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1119
March 6, 2025

Chair Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

My name is Laura Lacher, executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). EDND represents over 80 economic development professionals and organizations across the state, dedicated to fostering economic growth, workforce development, and business expansion. On behalf of our members, we strongly support HB 1119, which calls for a legislative management study on early childhood services and child care during the 2025-26 interim.

Child care is vital to North Dakota's workforce and economy. Lack of access hinders business growth, workforce participation, and economic development. Employers struggle to retain workers, and families face limited options, often forcing parents—out of the workforce. This study provides an opportunity to assess current policies, streamline regulations, and explore solutions that expand access while supporting providers.

A strong child care system is critical to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, ensuring businesses can operate effectively, and fostering economic growth in communities statewide. By evaluating licensing requirements, assistance programs, provider capacity, and administrative efficiencies, this study will help identify ways to improve child care accessibility and affordability.

Investing in child care strengthens our workforce and communities. We urge your support for this study and a "Do Pass" recommendation on HB 1119. EDND stands ready to assist. Thank you for your time.