

TESTIMONY
Senate Human Services Committee
SB 2323
January 25, 2023
Senator Kathy Hogan

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. I am Senator Kathy Hogan from Central Fargo with a small corner of West Fargo.

SB 2323 is one of five bills being introduced to address the childcare crisis. In December 2022, KIDS COUNT ND submitted a comprehensive overview of their needs and it can be found at <https://ndkidscount.org/north-dakotas-child-care-system-investments-needed-to-support-families-and-child-care-businesses>. These bills are linked to that study.

Over the last several sessions, the ND legislature and the Executive branch have recognized the need to expand early childhood services to provide families and children the essential support needed to prevent or reduce long-term educational and social problems. These efforts have been strongly supported by policy makers because of their strong researched based success. The family structures have changed significantly, and community supports are also changing. Even if all want to go back to the 1950's and 60's, with stay-at-home mothers, extended family available to help and strong neighborhood support, that is not likely to happen. So we as leaders must consider ways to strengthen today's family.

BEST IN CLASS

Beginning in 2021, the *Best-in-Class* Pre-K program, an evidenced-based model, was implemented in ND. Today there are over 50 classrooms in 38 sites, primarily in rural areas. This model provides educational services to 4-year-olds and parent training to all families involved. A brief overview of this model can be found at <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/DHS%20Legacy/bic-expectations-admin-mtg-presentation-7-13-2022.pdf>

This bill works with the Governor's budget to expand the *Best-in-Class* model.

HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START

The Head Start program began in 1965 through federal legislation and ND was one of the first states to implement Head Start in 1965.

Head Start programs prepare America's most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. The overall goal of Head Start is to increase the social ability of children in low-income families and children with disabilities and improve the chances of success in school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children and families in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being, while engaging parents as partners every step of the way.

Head Start preschool programs, typically serves 3- and 4-year-old children, and Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Head Start services are delivered nationwide through 1,600, agencies which tailor the federal program to the local needs of families in their service area. In ND, there are 14 Head Start programs including four tribal programs.

The basic elements of Head Start are regulated through federal Program Performance Standards. Grantees and parents have control over their programs, and each is designed to meet the needs of families in the local community. Currently there are waiting lists for the Head Start programs, particularly for 3-year-old programs because of the lack of funding.

Head Start has been the creator in the movement to address the needs of the whole child, including the educational, vocational, and material needs of the entire family. Head Start philosophy is that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that successful child development programs must involve and empower parents to have a lasting impact on the lives of low-income children. This philosophy is reflected in Head Start's administrative structure which includes a parent Policy Council that has decision-making authority.

2019 ND Study recommended additional funding to assure all eligible 3- and 4-year-old can be served.

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/sites/www/files/documents/Early%20Learning/2019%20North%20Dakota%20Head%20Start%20Collaboration%20Office%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf>

This bill would allow all eligible Head Start Children to be enrolled.

SCHOOL AGED QUALITY STANDARDS

For most children in ND, childcare does not end when a child goes to school but lasts until they are 11 or 12. Currently in ND we do not have a quality rating system for afterschool childcare. This bill would require the development of a Quality Rating over the next biennium.

Thank you Chairman Lee and I am more than willing to answer any questions.