



To whom it may concern,

My name is Ashley Isgrig, and I am the Site Coordinator at Hope Center for Learning-North in Fargo, ND. We have been a licensed childcare facility since August 2009, with a licensed capacity of 111 children. Currently, we serve 49 children during the school year. Since 2017, we have proudly participated in the Bright & Early program and are currently on Step 3.

I have been at Hope Center for Learning since February 2018. In June 2024, I stepped into the role of Site Coordinator after serving as the lead preschool teacher for several years. I began my career in early childhood education without formal training, and Bright & Early was a game-changer for me. The program's coaching and resources helped me develop the skills and knowledge necessary to create a high-quality classroom environment, which has been invaluable in my professional journey. I will forever be grateful for the guidance I received from my coach, and I know that Bright & Early continues to be a vital resource for the ongoing development of both new and experienced educators.

In addition to the training and support Bright & Early provides, the funding we receive through this program has played a crucial role in helping us maintain the high standard of care we offer to the children and families we serve. In the past three years, we've received \$8,000 annually in Quality Improvement grants, which have been essential for maintaining our childcare spaces. These funds have allowed us to update the learning environment by installing new carpeting, painting classrooms, and purchasing new furnishings such as shelves, chairs, and changing stations—improvements that directly impact the quality of care we provide.

The grant funding for 2024 will be used to send all 14 full-time staff members to the ND Early Childhood Conference in Bismarck. This investment in our staff's professional development is crucial. It enables us to cover wages, lodging, meals, and registration costs, providing our teachers with access to valuable learning opportunities that would otherwise be unaffordable. Continuing education for our staff is essential, not only for their professional growth but for the continued success of our center. Well-educated, well-trained teachers are critical to improving outcomes for children, and these opportunities allow us to attract and retain qualified professionals in an industry plagued by high turnover and underfunding.

The challenges facing early childhood educators—underpaid and often undereducated—are real, and without the support of programs like Bright & Early, it would be much more difficult to provide the quality care and education that young children need during these

formative years. The impact of this funding is profound: it empowers teachers, enhances the learning environment, and, ultimately, sets up children for success in their educational journeys.

I urge you to consider the long-term benefits of sustaining funding for early education programs like Bright & Early. The future of our children depends on the quality of care and education they receive in their early years. Without continued funding, we risk losing essential resources that help create and maintain high-quality learning environments that children need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ashley Isgrig
Site Coordinator
Hope Center for Learning-North

To encourage all children to know the love of Christ.

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