



Testimony in Support of HB 1012
House Appropriations – Human Resources Division

February 5th, 2025

Chairman Nelson and members of the committee,

My name is Jana Bruhschwein and I'm the Executive Director and Founder of Peace Academy which opened in 2022. We are a nonprofit preschool and childcare provider in the Fargo area and have utilized a few of the programs offered by the Department of Health and Human Services. I'm here today to testify in support of HB 1012 and the inclusion of these programs, with consideration of recommendations for improved utilization.

I'd like to share my sincere appreciation and highlight the tremendous benefits the Child Workforce Benefit program has had. We have three current staff members that are able to work with us thanks to the program and we have an additional three that will be returning to the workforce as part of our expansion. At a time when hourly salary rates for providing childcare can't keep up with the cost of having childcare this program has been huge for attracting and retaining a workforce in the childcare industry. As more people realize this program is an option, I anticipate an increase in the need for continued and additional funding to support the childcare workforce needs within Fargo and the rest of the state.

Next, I'd like to provide comments on the Start Up grants. In the fall of 2025 Peace Academy will be expanding to a new location with additional capacity to serve two classrooms of infants, max capacity of ten infants, per room and one classroom of toddlers with a maximum of fifteen children. Once licensed and open, we would then be eligible to receive funding for two of the three classrooms from the Start Up grants. It is important to know that the third classroom is ineligible for funding as the Department has capped the number of rooms per license that are eligible for funding. At a time when opening and operating a childcare facility for infants is already cost prohibitive, capping funding for the Start Up grants does not support the desperate need to increase care for this age.

Respectfully,

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