

Chairman Lee and Members of Human Service Committee,

My name is Kathy Busche. I own and operate two childcare programs in Hazen. One program is a group facility licensed for 30. I own the facility and operate a 0-5 program with a current enrollment of 33 children. The second program is my home where I operate a school age program with a license for 30 with 25 children enrolled. The facility is Step 2 in Bright and Early QRIS. Our home program is Step 1 QRIS. I have been operating my business out of my home since 2007 and purchased and renovated the facility opening the second location in January 2022. I have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from MSUM and providing quality childcare is my passion.

I am sorry I cannot be present to testify in person, but unfortunately, I do not have the backup staff required to be away from our programs at the present time.

I am writing to you today in support of SB 2301. Stabilization money provided since 2020 has allowed our program to flourish. With the funds we received over the last two years I was able to increase the starting wages for employees and was able to give existing staff raises of over \$2.00 per hour. For two years I was able to keep rates affordable for families who attend our programs as well. Because of these funds we were also able to expand into two programs meaning there are more children being served in our community.

I would love to see the amount of funding available through this bill increased. In 2020 with the original CEOG funding providers were receiving anywhere from \$236 to \$300 per child per month based on licensing capacity. In 2021 the funding changed and is now based on different tiers. \$50 per child with additional funds provided for providers who serve infants/toddlers, those who work non-traditional hours, those who are in childcare deserts, those who serve infants/toddlers who are on child care assistance as long as the provider was at least Step 2 rated. These amounts are substantially higher than what is proposed in SB 2301 and these increased amounts are what allowed my program to continue to be affordable for the families we serve.

I have attached the flyers for the original CEOG funding as well as the current Stabilization funding available to early childhood programs.

The other part of this bill I would like to see amended is section 2. The department shall provide an additional payment of twenty - five percent of the total monthly payment calculated under subsection 1 to a provider that meets the highest level in a voluntary quality improvement process.

Currently only 15 programs in the state of North Dakota hold the highest level of Quality Rating. I would like this additional funding of 25% to be available to programs who are at least Step 2 rated. Meaning they are doing more than simply the minimum licensing requirements. Only 89 programs in the state are Step 2 or higher in the Bright and Early QRIS system currently. This would give the 924 Step 1 programs an incentive to go through the necessary requirements to become Step 2 rated. This simple change would hopefully increase the number of programs participating in Bright and Early QRIS and increase the quality of childcare programs in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time. If you have any other questions, please feel free to reach out! I truly believe if we work together, we can make childcare in North Dakota the best it can be.

Kathy Busche

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The Childcare Emergency Operating Grant will be based on a provider's license type and licensed capacity. The payment will be made once every two weeks using the following rates:

License Type	Description	CEOG payment / child / month <i>(based on licensed capacity)</i>	CEOG payment / child / 2 week payment period
Licensed Family Child Care	Family providers may care for up to 7 children with no more than 3 under the age of 24 months, plus 2 additional school-age children	\$236	\$109
Licensed Group Child Care	Group childcare programs may be licensed in a home or a facility. Groups may be licensed for up to 30 children, with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratios, and sometimes local ordinances	\$236	\$109
Licensed Child Care Center	Childcare centers are licensed for at least 19 children in a facility, with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratios, and sometimes local ordinances.	\$300	\$139
Licensed Preschool	Preschools provide educational and socialization experiences for children age 2 years to kindergarten and may operate sessions for no more than 3 hours per day.	\$300	\$139
Licensed School-Age Program	School-age programs are licensed for at least 19 children in a facility, with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratios, and sometimes local ordinances.	\$300	\$139
Self-Declared Providers	Care for 5 or fewer children or 3 infants a home.	\$148	\$68

**Calculation of 2-Week Rate = Monthly Rate x 12 / 52 x 2*

EXAMPLES OF FEE APPLIED

Licensed Family Child Care, Licensed capacity of 7

$$\text{\$109} \times 7 = \text{\$763} / 2 \text{ weeks}$$

Licensed Child Care Center, Licensed capacity of 75

$$\text{\$139} \times 75 = \text{\$10,425} / 2 \text{ weeks}$$

Child Care Stabilization Grant



Child Care Stabilization Grant

Early childhood providers are eligible to receive an operating support payment to help promote stable and sustained operations of child care in communities across North Dakota.

A monthly base level payment **\$25 per child served per month** will be available to all licensed child care providers who certify enrollment on a monthly basis. Certification will be available to programs through a Monthly Renewal Grant located in the Quality Dashboard of their Growing Futures Organization Account. Programs will be **REQUIRED** to report how funds were spent every 30 days prior to applying for the next month.

Additional tiers of support payments per month:

- \$50 per child served will be available if a program operates in an under-served community;
- \$250 per infant and toddler served;
- \$250 per infant and toddler participating in CCAP (Child Care Assistance Program) **AND** the program is Bright & Early ND rated (Step 2-4);
- \$250 per child served during non-traditional hours for essential workers **AND** listed with Child Care Aware of ND's referral database.

Providers that have been approved to receive the Child Care Stabilization Grant must 'apply' for this grant each month for up to 12 months to continue receiving payments. Stabilization payments are available for up to 12 months while funding is available; funding cap (maximum) is \$225,000 per program. Providers can apply for all tiers of support, if applicable.

Stabilization Monthly Renewal Grant

Appears **ONLY** after your first Child Care Stabilization Grant application is complete.



Stabilization Monthly Renewal Grant

Early childhood providers are eligible to receive monthly payments to promote a stable and sustained operation of child care in communities across North Dakota. Each program applicant will be **REQUIRED** to report how they spent the funds **20-30 days** after payment is processed.

Providers that have been approved to receive the Child Care Stabilization Grant must 'apply' for this grant each month for up to 12 months to continue receiving payments. Stabilization payments are available for up to 12 months while funding is available; funding cap (maximum) is \$225,000 per program.

Health & Safety Grant and Technology Improvement Grant



Health & Safety Grant and Technology Improvement Grant

Health & Safety Grants up to \$10,000 Programs who are interested in making improvements to their program that would help improve both COVID-indicated and overall health and safety practices.

Each program applicant will be **REQUIRED** to report how they spent the funds 90 days after payment is processed. Contact a Health & Safety Consultant at Child Care Aware of ND for information and assistance on putting together a thoughtful funding request.

Technology grants up to \$3000 for child care providers to better connect to training, professional development, CCAP reimbursement, and licensing systems. Each program applicant will be **REQUIRED** to report how they spent the funds 90 days after payment is processed.

Child Care Start-Up Grant

Funding not available at this time.



Child Care Start-Up Grant

Funding not available at this time.

Opportunities to apply for a startup grant will be available to recently licensed (license dated within 60 days of application submission) or soon-to-be licensed early childhood programs. Grants may also be available to programs that are expanding their child care license capacity.

Program must have had required inspection, an on-site licensor visit and begun the licensing application before submitting an application or have a licensed date within 60 days of application and agree to work with a Building Quality coach during start-up period.

Awards will be tiered based on proposed size, type and location of the program start-up or expansion.

Quality Improvement Grant



Quality Improvement Grant

Quality Improvement Grants are available to early childhood programs licensed or approved by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to support investments in quality. This grant may be used to purchase materials and supplies that will enhance the learning environment, to offset costs of curriculum and assessment use, and to support professional development opportunities for program staff.

This grant is delivered post-Quality Rating and measured by the program receiving their desired Quality Rating. Programs applying for this grant must have a Bright & Early ND Step 2-4 Quality Rating issued on or after September 1st, 2021. This grant is supported by the program's Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

Inclusion Support Grant

Suspended pending additional funding.



Inclusion Support Grant

The Inclusion Support Program provides grant funding and technical assistance to licensed early childhood providers in North Dakota who indicate that they are or will provide care for children with disabilities or developmental delays.

A child with disabilities or who is at risk for developmental delays includes any child between the ages of birth and twelve years who receives support through either public or private services and includes a child who is in the process of being evaluated for formal support. A child who is at risk for developmental delays includes any child between the ages of birth and twelve years who received foster care services; who has a previous substantiated history as a victim of child abuse, neglect, or domestic violence; who is homeless; who has documented special health care needs; or who has a parent with a significant disability.

This grant is designed to help both home and center-based providers create and maintain an inclusive environment that supports children with disabilities or developmental delays to learn, grow, play, and develop alongside their peers in an inclusive setting.

Grant Funding Eligibility:

Any licensed or self-declared early childhood service provider, or those in the process of licensing who indicate that they are or will provide care for children with disabilities or developmental delays can apply for grant funding through the Inclusion Support Program. Grantees will be assigned an Inclusion Specialist to assist with technical assistance and funding guidance.

Grant funding can be used for these purposes:

- Support the staffing needs aimed at providing targeted care for children with disabilities or developmental delays. (Up to \$24,000/year)
- Modifying a childcare setting to accommodate children with diverse abilities and needs (building ramps, widening doors, etc.) - (Up to \$5,000).
- Purchase of equipment for children with special needs (Up to \$1,000).