

E-mail Received August 10, 2021

Subject: Written Testimony Front Line Worker Pay Working Group

To Whom It May Concern:

As a licensed family childcare provider in Olmsted County since 2001, last year, 2020, was the hardest year I have ever worked. It was more challenging than when I was just starting out as a single mother with two young children of my own.

There was a significant financial burden as well as the constant threat of contracting the virus in our own homes. We had to purchase additional supplies, worked longer hours to meet sanitation expectations, spent more uncompensated time learning and keeping up with the ever-changing guidance, and the cost of everything has increased. There certainly still is an increased risk of contracting the virus when one has people coming into their home daily.

Childcare, early childhood education, daycare, or whatever you call it is infrastructure. While childcare has not traditionally been seen as infrastructure, it is essential to other sectors being able to go to work. We are the frontline so the frontline workers can do their work. We may be somewhat invisible, but we are the base of support for workers.

Schools shutting down emphasized that early childhood care and education IS infrastructure. For families that were already in LFCC, their lives went on fairly seamlessly because their children had a place to go, that was already small groups with consistent cohorts. We were exactly what was needed, and we didn't even have to do much to be ready to serve children and families. While the structure of our businesses largely allowed us to keep on working, there were and still are significant stresses that arise from operating a caring business during a global pandemic. In addition to being nurse, educator, cook, diaper changer, play partner, and all the roles we already played, we have had to become public health experts to share current information with families, and we have had to become the health police, stopping symptomatic children from entering our homes. This of course, prevents parents from going to work. It is a significant stressor and burden to be all those things to all the people and not always be recognized as a significant contributor to the economy of the state. We may be working in our homes, and we do not have a loud voice, but we are necessary, and we did (and still do) carry a huge burden to care for the youngest Minnesotans while their parents work.

Licensed family childcare providers meet the federal criteria for this funding and the eligible uses that Minnesota has defined. Please support infrastructure, families, and children by using this funding to support and yes, reward, licensed family childcare provider for their long hours and sacrifice to care for children so parents can work.

Respectfully,

Theresa Peplinski
Rochester, MN