

Testimony
Senate Bill 2186 – Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Price, Chairman
February 27, 2007

Chairman Price and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Paul Ronningen, Director, Children and Family Services with the Department of Human Services. I am here today to provide information regarding Senate Bill 2186.

Many early care and education professionals in North Dakota have been involved in the development of the professional development plan, titled Growing Futures, since 2000. The current plan lays a solid foundation for a comprehensive professional development system for the state that would be voluntary for the individual professional. SB 2186 builds upon this plan and offers constructive guidance to the Department.

Dr. Linda Jagielo, Early Childhood Services Administrator and Linda Rorman, Head Start Collaboration Administrator of my staff continue to provide leadership to this initiative by coordinating the Department's role. In addition, the Department is required to include a professional development plan in our 2007 Child Care Development Fund Grant Application. The Department will be establishing a workgroup to craft the contracts with the Resource and Referral Network that includes input from our provider network.

The early childhood workforce wants and appreciates opportunities to increase its knowledge and skills. The field is made up of dedicated women who work hard at their jobs. They know that education is beneficial to their success at work. The key is accessibility.... having the

money, the time and the support to make it possible. Scholarships and stipends provide the funding. Counseling and mentoring services provide the necessary support. These critical elements in a workforce development initiative are found in SB 2186. The Department has posted the Professional Development Plan on the Department of Human Services web site along with a summarizing power point presentation. It can be found at: <http://www.nd.gov/humanservices/services/childcare/>.

The Department is currently not budgeted for these activities. In addition, the Child Care Development Fund Grant has been reduced and Child Care Resource and Referral will be receiving \$166,221 less in their contracts for the 2007-09 biennium. The current fiscal note addresses the reduction of federal dollars that will occur during the 2007-09 biennium. Finally, the fiscal note of \$1,900,000 to begin this work has been developed by the sponsors of this bill.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.