

Testimony
House Bill 1104 – Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman

January 8, 2019

Chairman Weisz and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Amanda Carlson – Early Childhood Services Administrator with Children and Family Services of the Department of Human Services (Department). I appear today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1104.

House Bill 1104 seeks to allow a partnership between the Department and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) when performing the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care providers. This program is called Bright & Early North Dakota.

To maximize the learning that occurs in the early years, the Department launched Bright & Early North Dakota statewide in 2015. Bright & Early North Dakota is an organized and cost-effective framework to sustain child care capacity, develop the child care workforce, prepare children to enter school ready to succeed, and provide valuable consumer information to families. Bright & Early North Dakota is currently a voluntary system and child care providers are not required to participate.

Currently, the Department implements Bright & Early North Dakota for all licensed child care providers. Head Start/Early Head Start, Tribal early care and education programs, and school age programs, are unable to participate in Bright & Early North Dakota, due to the requirement of being licensed by the Department as a child care provider. This requirement prohibits efficient and consistent measurement of quality across all early care and education programs within the State.

House Bill 1104 will allow the Department and DPI to partner on the implementation of Bright & Early North Dakota, as Head Start/Early Head Start, Tribal early care and education programs, and school age programs will be able to participate in Bright & Early North Dakota without having to become licensed child care providers. This allows more efficient usage of existing resources to align and strengthen the delivery of early care and education services across the State.

House Bill 1104 will allow the Department and DPI to better use existing resources in order to improve the overall participation of children in early care and education programs, improve program quality while maintaining availability of services, expanding parental choice and knowledge about existing programs, and enhancing school readiness for children.

Section 1, Page 1, Lines 19 and 20 of the Bill removes the age requirement limitation for the superintendent of public instruction to approve an early childhood program operated by a school district. Page 2, Lines 1 through 3 provide authorization for the superintendent of public instruction to conduct a quality improvement process for all early childhood programs and self-declarations licensed or approved by the Department.

Section 2, Page 2, Lines 28-30 through Page 3, Line 2 updates the definition of “early childhood services” under section 50-11.2-02 of the North Dakota Century Code by updating a citation, modifying the language to reflect current language used in section 15.1-37-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, and removing the age limitation. Page 3, Line 18 adds a definition of “educational facility” to mean a public or nonpublic school. Page 4, Lines 10 through 13 updates the definition of “preschool” to remove the limitation that a preschool cannot serve a child for more than three hours per day.

Section 3, Page 5, Line 11 expands the voluntary quality improvement process to self-declaration providers. Lines 16 through 18 provides the Department the ability to contract with a state agency, as well as a private, nonprofit agency, to provide technical assistance or to implement the provisions under section 50-11.1-14.1 of the North Dakota Century Code concerning workforce development, quality improvement, technical assistance, and capacity building.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.