

Testimony
Senate Bill 2186 – Department of Human Services
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chairman
January 15, 2007

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate 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 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 and many hold a dream to further their education and possibly get a college degree. For many, they are the first in their families to do so. The key is accessibilityhaving the

money, the time and the support to make it possible. It is unrealistic to expect the early care and education workforce to go back to school while they are working full time without financial assistance. 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: 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 fiscal note of \$2,825,000 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.