



Senator Melissa Wicklund
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W. Room 2107
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 23rd, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Start Early Funders Coalition, we are writing in support of SF 4581, which would create an absent day limit exemption for programs experiencing extraordinary circumstances.

Access to quality child care and early learning programs has been a top priority for the Start Early Funders Coalition for over a decade. All families deserve access to child care and early learning. Early learning programs allow parents to work and contribute to our economy. These programs are foundational in supporting healthy cognitive and physical development of young children, and a supported early childhood system is one of the most impactful way our state can make towards a healthier and more vibrant future for all Minnesotans.

The impact of Metro Surge has been devastating to our children and to our child care system, which is comprised of many small independently operated and owned small businesses. Programs have experienced significant strain as parents had to make difficult decisions about the safety of bringing their children to child care programs, often “using up” their allotted absent days. With the cost of child care being out of reach for many families, these same children would be unable to attend their quality program without financial support through the Child Care Assistance Program or Early Learning Scholarships. When families deplete their allowed absent days, they are financially responsible for paying for the cost of all additional days their child is absent from child care, making families more likely to drop out of child care.

Our vision as a Coalition is that every child in Minnesota is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success. A robust and supported early childhood system is essential in making this a reality.

Sincerely,
Allison Corrado,
Start Early Funders Coalition
Public Policy Committee Chair