



Legislative Priority Issue #1 2019 Legislative Session

Fund Implementation of the Recommendations of the Legislative Task Force on Access to Affordable Child Care

Background

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) is a nine-county Regional Development Commission as established under Minnesota Statute §462.381-462.398 the “Regional Development Act.” As a representative of local units of government in Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock counties, the SRDC represents 9 counties, 80 cities and 163 townships. The SRDC assists local units of government in the region with many economic development and infrastructure projects, including developing and supporting child care within the region.

As part of the SRDC’s ongoing Strategic Planning Process, child care has risen to the level of one of the agency’s top priorities. SRDC’s Strategic Goal #2, Responding to the Needs of the Region’s Changing Population, Priority #1 is “Expansion of Daycare Services for Children and Adults in the Region.” Numerous articles have been published documenting the need for daycare, especially in the rural areas, yet it is difficult to develop a specific ask of the legislature when the problem itself is so varied. The 2016 Minnesota Legislature formed a Task Force to address the shortage of adequate daycare and came up with some specific recommendations.

“Introduction

(Source: Excerpted from the Executive Summary, Legislative Task Force on Access to Affordable Child Care, January 15, 2017)

The Legislative Task Force on Access to Affordable Child Care was created by the 2016 Legislature to review the loss of child care providers in the state, assess affordability issues for parents and providers, and identify areas that need to be addressed by the Minnesota Legislature. Over the course of four months, task force members worked with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and several stakeholders to gather information about Minnesota’s child care landscape—one with a rocky terrain of high costs for families; an ever-increasing shortage of providers that causes desperation in parents who seek to find care; and communities that are feeling the economic ripple effects caused by the shortage and high costs. The task force received input from over 50 child care providers, child care organizations, parents, guardians, state and county officials, and concerned Minnesotans. The material gathered during public testimony, in conjunction with facts and figures about child care delivered during presentations, helped to inform and guide the final report recommendations.



2401 Broadway Ave, Suite 1
Slayton, MN 56172



507-836-8547



www.swrdc.org
srdc@swrdc.org



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Recommendations *(ibid)*

Regulatory

- Develop consistency and uniformity in regulatory enforcement; improve relationships and communication between the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), county licensors, and child care providers; and improve fairness in compliance measures. **(For example: the State could give the Counties authority to regulate Daycare Centers, much like they already delegate Food, Beverage and Lodging Inspections.)**
- Ensure training is accessible, relevant, and affordable; and broaden and deepen the trainer pool.

Affordability

- Reform and invest in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- Determine ways to address costs for middle income families, whether through targeted funding, tax policy, or community/business investments in child care.

Long-term Discussions

- Consider the creation of an independent board for child care providers.
- Encourage more people to enter and stay in the child care provider workforce.
- Consider ways to address emergency child care assistance for families fleeing abuse.”

SRDC Policy Position

The SRDC supports funding from the Legislature to develop and implement the specific recommendations of the Legislative Task Force on Access to Affordable Child Care. As the lack of child care, especially in the rural areas of Minnesota has resulted in, and will continue to result in, negative economic development impacts, a cohesive, comprehensive, strategy for addressing the issues needs to be implemented. It is our belief that flexibility in how the recommendations are accomplished will be the key to a successful outcome.

For Further Information Contact:

Miron Carney, SRDC Legislative Chair	(507) 836-8410	slaytonmayor@gmail.com
Jay Trusty, Executive Director	(507) 836-1636	execdir@swrdc.org
Robin Weis, Economic Development Director	(507) 836-1638	Robin@swrdc.org



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srdc@swrdc.org



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