

March 22, 2016

Education Innovation Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee:

I am a mother, grandmother, and community member from St. Paul. I have five grandchildren: JaMarya (9), King (7), JaMerson (4), Reign (3) and Reality (18 months). Two years ago, I learned that I had to take care of my grandchildren. Their mother had to leave due to unforeseen circumstances. My life changed at that moment.

When I first learned that I would be taking care of five kids at the age of 52, I was shocked and scared. The last thing I thought I would worry about at my age was the cost of childcare. I was a full time student working towards an associate's degree and living in a one-bedroom apartment. I took my grandchildren in and I was overwhelmed. I tried to juggle taking care of them, going to school, and working but it was a struggle. I was on the verge of giving up.

I wanted to put my grandchildren in childcare. I had to go through the process of applying for CCAP. Then I received a letter saying that my daughter had applied for childcare scholarships for her children before she left, and as a result, all three of my grandchildren would be receiving scholarships to attend a childcare center of my choice. Today they are enrolled in New Horizons Academy Day Care Center.

I can honestly say that being able to send my grandchildren to childcare through scholarships saved my life. I was able to continue my schooling, move to a bigger home, and able to get a job in early childhood education advocacy. Having a scholarship gave me the upward mobility my family and I needed. I cannot say enough how much that meant for all of us.

The developmental changes that I see in my grandchildren since they have been enrolled in childcare are astonishing. Every day they come home having learned something new and they are excited to keep learning. They have amazing social skills and have made great friends. I even see this change in my youngest, especially in her vocabulary. Where children spend their day and what they spend their day on matters. I am grateful that my grandchildren are well taken care of at childcare. I just hope this opportunity is extended to all families that are in need. Scholarships have the potential help so many families like it helped mine.

Sincerely,

Jolene Mason