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Two bills, one goal: Legislation aims to create long-term solutions to Greater Minnesota's child care shortage

ST. PAUL—A pair of bills that call on the state to make modest investments to help address the critical child care shortage in Greater Minnesota were introduced today at the Minnesota Legislature.

[SF 537/HF 422](#), authored by Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester) and Rep. Jeff Brand (DFL-St. Peter), and [SF 538/HF 423](#), authored by Sen. Jerry Relph (R-St. Cloud) and Rep. Brand, both create and fund new grant programs with the shared goal of increasing child care capacity while fostering successful and sustainable child care business operations in Greater Minnesota.

“A big thank you to Sen. Nelson, Sen. Relph and Rep. Brand for taking on this complicated issue,” said Nicole Griensewic Mickelson, executive director of the Region Nine Development Commission and president of the Greater Minnesota Partnership (GMNP), an economic development advocacy organization that has been working with legislators to explore ways to address Greater Minnesota's child care needs.

“Communities and businesses are reeling from the effects of the child care shortage,” Griensewic Mickelson added. “These bills are a promising start to bringing more child care options to Greater Minnesota and helping providers run successful businesses.”

While the child care shortage is a major concern across the entire state, the impact is particularly acute in rural communities. According to a study by the Center for Rural Policy and Development, Greater Minnesota lost more than 15,000 child care spots between 2006-2015—largely due to a significant decline in in-home providers. Child care centers have helped make up for the loss of in-home providers in the metro area and larger population centers, but small and medium-sized rural communities are still struggling to fill that void.

SF 537/HF 422 addresses the need for more licensed child care providers by awarding \$3 million in grants to the Minnesota Initiative Foundations for the planning, coordination, training and

education necessary to expand child care access. The money will be used to help providers with business improvement planning, quality mentoring and workforce development.

SF 538/HF 423 aims to generate more physical spaces for child care through the Child Care Capital Grant Program, which provides grants to child care providers, local governments and regional economic development organizations in Greater Minnesota to cover up to 50 percent of the costs to build, upgrade or expand child care facilities to increase capacity and meet state requirements. The program would be funded at \$10 million under the bill.

“The child care shortage is a complex problem and there is no silver bullet, but we’re hopeful that the Legislature will support these two bills that go hand-in-hand toward the same goal of finding a long-term solution to the child care crisis in Greater Minnesota,” said Griensewic Mickelson.

The Greater Minnesota Partnership (GMNP) is a nonprofit corporation devoted to advocating for state economic development policies and resources that benefit Greater Minnesota. Its members consist of businesses, chambers of commerce, economic development authorities, colleges and universities, cities and nonprofit organizations from throughout Greater Minnesota.

For more information, please visit the GMNP online at gmnp.org or on Twitter [@the_gmnp](https://twitter.com/the_gmnp).

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