

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

June 20, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

Over the last four-plus years, we've worked together to deliver on our shared priority of expanding access to quality, affordable childcare for Montana families. I'm proud of the reforms we've secured to streamline regulations and reduce barriers to entry for new childcare providers, while also making responsible investments that help address affordability and access to childcare for families. Together, we've made great strides toward increasing capacity for quality and affordable childcare across Montana.

In 2023, we enacted House Bill 648, which provided \$7 million in funding to increase access to childcare by expanding eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship (BBS) program, which makes this important service more attainable to eligible low-income families through scholarships. House Bill 648 permanently expanded income eligibility for the BBS Program from 150% to 185% of the federal poverty level, making more families eligible for the program. In 2025, a Montana family of four with an annual income of less than \$59,477.50 is eligible for BBS.

Additionally, we've eliminated unnecessary red tape that burdened childcare providers across our state. We've done so while ensuring the safety of our children, growing Montana's childcare workforce, encouraging providers to innovate, and increasing the clarity and consistency of rules and regulations so families and childcare businesses alike have certainty and are able to navigate the childcare system more easily. We've accomplished a lot in this space thanks to the work of the Legislature and the dedicated leaders and staff at the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

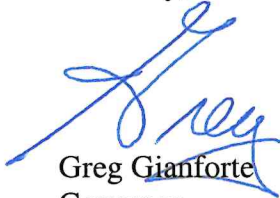
While well-intentioned, House Bill 456 proposes to further expand eligibility for the BBS program to include childcare workers who have a household income less than two times the state median income, essentially providing a benefit to one worker to the exclusion of others. The bill's expanded eligibility is projected to cost Montana taxpayers more than \$21 million over the next four years.

Childcare workers are the workforce behind the workforce, allowing parents to work and provide for their family. I share the sponsor's aim that we need to do more to improve the recruitment and retention of childcare workers, which will help further expand access to childcare for all Montana families.

With House Bill 924 enacted, we have tools at our disposal to address Montana's childcare shortage and innovate the industry, including offering grants to launch or grow childcare services, improve affordability, and increase access.

Therefore, in accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 456: "AN ACT EXPANDING THE BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO CHILD-CARE WORKERS EMPLOYED BY A LICENSED DAY-CARE CENTER OR REGISTERED FAMILY OR GROUP DAY-CARE HOME; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 52-2-714 AND 52-2-715, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State