



Dear Members of the HHS (SF4410) Conference Committee:

We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspectives on several provisions under deliberation within the conference committee. You have an important opportunity to improve the lives of our state's children, especially those in the dawn of life and in the shadows of life. In this letter, we lift up a few specific provisions.

Both the House and Senate bills include important provisions that improve support for the 56,000 children that are given an improved chance to succeed through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). All of the changes create a MFIP program that reduces cliff effects, helping families build a solid economic base from which they and their children can launch.

Permanent investments in Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program included in the House bill advance a proven strategy for addressing disparities by amplifying innovative solutions that leverage community assets, are culturally relevant, and center the experiences and dignity of impacted people and communities.

- Due to limited funding, the vast majority of the current 23 **great ideas included in the program did not receive full funding**, compromising their potential. Furthermore, **too many promising proposals that harness the power and knowledge within communities were left behind.**
- Without legislative action the **program will end in 2023, jeopardizing the important progress being made** in communities across the state and as well as the innovative process that involves and uplifts communities of color, American Indian communities, and geographically dispersed communities while highlighting their invaluable knowledge.

New state investments set more of our youngest Minnesotans up for success, among them: **Child Care Assistance** provider rates, expanded family definition and waitlist changes; grants to **family, friend and neighbor caregivers**; and expanded voluntary **home visiting**.

A multi-pronged approach included in both bills is necessary to address the mental health crisis among children and the adults in their lives. With a quarter of 9th graders reported a long-term mental health, behavioral or emotional problem even before the pandemic, the time is now for significant resources and a full court press.

The House bill also include many other critical provisions, such as: **Continuous 12-month MA coverage for children**; an **increase in the SNAP gross income limit**; investments that help **ensure no child is homeless**; **continuation of community resource hubs** and the **Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Families act**.

We know these provisions are critical to the future of our children and our state. Thank you for prioritizing them.

Debra Fitzpatrick, Policy and Research Director