



Written Testimony to House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee re: HF1024

February 25, 2021

Dear Chair Schultz & Members of the Committee:

ISAI AH is a statewide organization comprised of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, and 400 childcare centers. Altogether, the institutions we help organize represent over half a million Minnesotans. Our mission is to enable people to organize for racial, social and economic justice, and build a democracy that respects every person's dignity and a caring economy where everyone can thrive.

Young Minnesotans between the ages of zero to five of every race, place, and creed deserve access to affordable, safe, and enriching childcare programs and educational opportunities. We write in support of HF1024 because it would create a new cabinet-level department of early childhood to house some of the most important public programs in our state.

For over ten years, policy makers and experts have known that good governance in early childhood requires the alignment of programs currently operating in three separate state agencies under one administrative roof. A [2011 Minnesota task force overwhelmingly recommended](#) the creation of a single state agency. A [2018 OLA report](#) noted the significant challenges posed by housing similar programs in difference agencies, challenges that HF1024 will mitigate. In passing this bill, Minnesota would join the growing number of states who have found success by creating a single state agency to operate early childcare programs.

We applaud the efforts of critical interagency efforts like the Children's cabinet, the pre-school development grant, and the informal partnerships between DHS, MDH, and MDE. None of those efforts, however, are designed to meet the profound structural challenges posed when programs like CCAP, early learning scholarships, voluntary pre-kindergarten, head start, and others seek to meet similar goals but function in separate agencies. The new department will help all members of the early childhood education community including childcare centers, parents and families, regulators, and early childhood educators.

This bill is a non-partisan and common-sense solution to the administrative challenges posed by housing programs in these disparate agencies. We strongly support this important step in making Minnesota a place where the youngest in our communities are given the absolute best chance at a great start.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director, ISAI AH