OLMSTED COUNTY
MINNESOTA

February 28, 2022   ***Sent via Email**

The Honorable Representative Dave Pinto, Chair
Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee
503 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for HF 3484 – Basic Sliding Fee Child Care

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the House Early Childhood Committee:

On behalf of Olmsted County, thank you for hearing HF 3484 and to Representative Pryor for chief authoring this important legislation. Access to safe and affordable child care is a key component to building a foundation that supports a thriving workforce. The Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) Child Care Program is a tool to support parents who are striving to access the workforce for the first time or returning to the workforce after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In December of 2020, Olmsted County had a BSF waiting list of 226 families. The 2021 Legislature increased funding allocations for the BSF program and temporarily reordered the waiting list priorities. Due to this legislative support, the county has been able to reach out to 176 of the families on the waiting list to help them access child care assistance. If the reprioritization had not happened, many of these families would still be on the waiting list, despite increased funding for the BSF program.

The BSF Child Care Program is crucial to enabling more parents to join the workforce while providing a safe and supportive learning environment for their children. Making the current prioritization permanent will allow counties to continue to serve more families who would not otherwise have access to child care assistance.

Olmsted County respectfully urges your support to make this prioritization permanent, so counties do not have to resume waiting lists, and to allow full utilization of the annual BSF allocation for families who have no other means of support. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Thein, Chair
Olmsted County Board of Commissioners
thein.mark@co.olmsted.mn.us