



children's defense fund minnesota

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Committee,

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, as a member of the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition, proudly asks you to support HF 4099: Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program. **We support HF 4099 because we believe it is a proven strategy that addresses disparities as well as amplifies the innovative solutions that leverage community assets, are culturally relevant, and center the experiences and dignity of impacted people and communities.**

Currently, twenty-three innovative community-generated solutions are being put to work tackling persistent unequal child outcomes across the state with funding from the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program. Unfortunately, due to limited funding, the vast majority of these great ideas did not receive the full funding requested, compromising their potential. Furthermore, too many promising proposals that harness the power and knowledge within communities were left behind due to lack of resources. Finally, without legislative action the program will end in 2023, jeopardizing the important progress being made in communities across the state.

The Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program represents more than money, it is also a process that involves and uplifts communities of color, American Indian communities, and geographically dispersed communities while highlighting their invaluable knowledge. Minnesota's population has been transforming for the last 30 years. Almost a third of the babies born in Minnesota between 2018 and 2020 were children of color and American Indian children. By 2035, one in four children in our state will be a child of color. As our state's future leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that they are all equipped.

We strongly encourage you to support HF 4099 and give this innovative program the permanent adequate funding needed to fully deliver on its promise. Every step we take now to improve the lives of children improves the lives of all of us now and into the future. Minnesota will never go wrong when we put children and families at the center.

Sincerely,

Debra Fitzpatrick
Director of Policy and Research

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Director of Community Engagement