

Representative Cheryl Youakim  
Chair, Public Safety Finance and Policy  
443 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 17, 2023

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition, we express our support for HF 2320, to create a new Department of Children, Youth and Families before your committee. Our vision as a Coalition is that every child in Minnesota is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success. Our coalition is committed to supporting policies that will benefit low-income, rural and Black, Indigenous and children of color and their families; and the programs that serve them.

HF 2320 and the Department of Children, Youth and Families is the result of years of planning including a recommendation of a task force that both studied the issue and recommended Minnesota create a new department. This proposal demonstrates a deep understanding that the disjointed range of programs that aim to reach young children and their families have created a fragmented system that does not serve them well. Families may access early learning programs for their children that fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services, while also needing nutritional services that fall under the Department of Health or early childhood screening that falls under the Department of Education. Forming a new department of Children, Youth and Families provides the opportunity to streamline and consolidate early childhood services, programming and funding creating additional accountability and attention for Minnesota's youngest children. Families with young children need easier access to all of the programs that help young children grow and thrive, and it is essential that we work towards creating the system that meets that need.

We support a robust early childhood system that gives children and families access to a continuum of high-quality child care and early learning programs. We must maintain and continue to grow equitable investments in critical early childhood programs based on ongoing community feedback and guidance.

Sincerely,

Carrie Zelin Johnson  
Start Early Funder  
Coalition Coordinator

Allison Corrado  
Public Policy  
Committee

Denise Mayotte  
Public Policy  
Committee

Nancy Jost  
Public Policy Committee