

April 6, 2021

Dear Members of the House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Early Care and Education Crisis Work Group, we are writing in support of specific provisions of H.F. 2230 as amended. The Crisis Work Group is a broad group of organizations that came together in 2018 to address two crises impacting Minnesota's young children: 1) Worst-in-the-nation achievement and opportunity gaps, stemming in part from lack of access to quality child care; and 2) a shortage of quality child care supply for children statewide. We understand these crises are intertwined and must be addressed in a coordinated way, and each of the crises has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Work Group supports the increase in rates for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), we have concerns that the bill includes increases above the 30th percentile of market rates without linking those increases to program quality ratings. The Work Group recommends linking funding above 30th percentile to quality to incent more programs to adopt the kindergarten readiness best practices that have been shown through independent evaluation to support important school readiness gains, with the biggest gains for children in low-income families.

We appreciate the additional appropriation of general fund dollars to expand the Early Learning Scholarship program to serve additional children, although it doesn't come close to meeting the needs of children with high needs currently unable to access Scholarships. We encourage the committee to identify ways of using American Rescue Plan Act dollars in support of Scholarships.

The Work Group fully supports the language and funding in the bill related to the evaluation of Parent Aware and statewide implementation and public reporting on the Kindergarten Entrance Assessment. We believe the information resulting from these initiatives is critical to informing continuous improvement of Minnesota's early learning system.

The language requiring an Early Childhood governance report is consistent with recommendations of the Crisis Work Group and we support this effort.





Finally, while we support the allocation of federal relief funding for direct grants to early care and education programs, we encourage you to increase the grant amounts for programs operating/expanding in child care deserts and for programs serving children with high needs, and to consider tiered grant amounts based on a programs' Parent Aware rating. This structure would provide incentive for programs to address both the gaps in the supply of quality early care and education **and** access to those programs for children with highest need.

We appreciate the work done by the Committee around these issues and look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely,

Jan Kruchoski
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 Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen Former
 Chair, Minnesota Chamber of
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 Founding Partner, Fallon Worldwide

