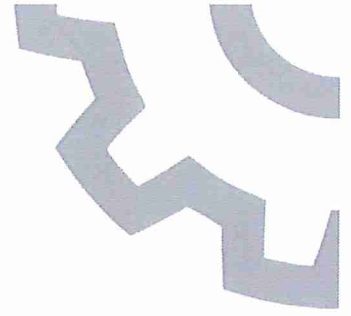




9740 GRAND AVE S, BLOOMINGTON, MN 55420
952.888.4262 | www.theworks.org



March 14, 2023

Representative Jeff Brand
501 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Brand:

On behalf of The Works Museum, and a member of the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum Coalition, I am pleased to be writing this letter of support for HF2185, funding for capital improvements for the 10 children's museums that make up the coalition.

For nearly thirty years, The Works Museum has inspired the next generation of innovators, engineers, and creative problem solvers through hands-on exploration of engineering. The Works is a child-focused interactive museum and a leader in providing K-6 informal engineering education in Minnesota. We are dedicated to engaging children and their families in STEM, reaching more than 70,000 people each year through museum visits, school workshops, camps, and events. Children's personal experiences with STEM are critical in helping spark and maintain long-term interest in STEM and build Minnesota's future STEM workforce.

Coming out of the pandemic, The Works Museum harnessed an opportunity to transform our organization through the renovation of our museum gallery. During the past year, we invested our resources to retain an exhibit design firm to work with us to design our new exhibits. With the exhibit design and gallery renovation complete, we are in the process of securing private and public funding to outfit the museum with new exhibits. The Works Museum is requesting \$1.2 million dollars in capital improvements to support the fabrication and installation of the new exhibits. This capital investment will help ensure that The Works Museum will provide high-quality and impactful STEM learning experiences to the children and families we serve, for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration. If you require more information about the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum coalition or The Works Museum please contact me at jill@theworks.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Measells".

Jill Measells
CEO
The Works Museum

Dear Representative Brand and members of the House Capital Investment Committee,

As a member of the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum Coalition, I am writing in support of HF2185 to appropriate Capital Investment funds for children's museums across Greater Minnesota.

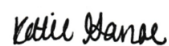
Otter Cove Children's Museum opened in downtown Fergus Falls in September 2020. With only 4,000 square feet of exhibit space and 6,500 usable square feet total, Otter Cove is one of the smallest children's museums operating. At the same time, by welcoming more than 30,000 visitors a year, Otter Cove is one of the busiest children's museums per square foot and dollars spent.

This results in Otter Cove hitting the ceiling of how it can serve its regional audience and how it can increase its sustainability. Moreover, the current space limitations create a ceiling on Otter Cove's broader economic impact back to Fergus Falls and Otter Tail County (estimated to be \$2,551,924.53 in 2021 according to an economic impact study conducted by Greater Fergus Falls). To increase its impact, Otter Cove needs to increase its earned income, but to increase its earned income, Otter Cove needs to increase its square footage.

Otter Cove's request for \$3 million of Capital Investment funds will allow us to purchase our currently leased building and provide funding for the project management and construction of museum expansion (from one level of play space to three levels of play space).

By providing this one-time capital investment funding, you will help ensure our state's budget surplus is being invested to equitably benefit all Minnesota children. You will also help invest in the long-term resilience of children's museums across Greater Minnesota by supporting HF2185.

Together in play,



Katie Ganoë, Executive Director
Otter Cove Children's Museum
218-998-5438
katie@ottercoveff.org
105 W. Lincoln Avenue
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
www.ottercoveff.org

The header features a blue box on the left with the text 'CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER' in white. To its right is an orange box with the text 'DISCOVER. CONNECT. IMAGINE. PLAY.' in green. A green curved shape is on the far right.

CHILDREN'S
DISCOVERY
CENTER

DISCOVER.
CONNECT.
IMAGINE.
PLAY.

March 15, 2023

Dear Members of the Minnesota Legislature,

We are writing to you offering our strong support for state bonding appropriations for the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum Coalition to support ten children's museums across the state of Minnesota.

In Breckenridge, the lack of local year-round youth enrichment has become overwhelmingly apparent. Local volunteers and community leaders have taken the charge to develop the Children's Discovery Center. As part of a dynamic community center, the Children's Discovery Center is being designed as a children's museum and STEM Lab to serve children ages zero to 18, along with their families, who live in the community or visit from surrounding communities and counties of the tri-state area. The Children's Discovery Center mission is to provide a creative learning environment for the youth in our community to discover the world around them through unique, hands-on experiences. It will be a space for youth to explore, interact, and discover the science in everything around them. The Discovery Play is where children can explore and learn through imaginative play, and the STEM Discovery Lab will be an ever changing space that sparks curiosity and innovation. This facility will be providing rich and powerful explorative play-based learning opportunities for youth in our community, something not all kids have access to and certainly not in our community.

An accessible building has been donated, a local match secured, along with additional private fundraising in progress, making the Children's Discovery Center shovel ready. Our community fully supports this project and we are working together to make it happen. We are asking the state to come alongside us and support the youth and families in rural Minnesota.

The request of \$2.5M will be matched for the museum design and renovation of the 15,000 sqft. facility. This includes exhibit development and fabrication with a focus on play, STEM, and regional industry and culture.

Sincerely,

The Children's Discovery Center Board
- Joni Frolek, Beth Deal, Kellie Buck, and Kristin Brevik



March 16, 2023

RE: Support for HF2185

My name is Cassandra Miles, Executive Director of the emerging Great River Children's Museum in St. Cloud. Great River Children's Museum ("GRCM") is one of the ten (10) member organizations in the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum Coalition. Together, with the other coalition members, I am writing to advocate for capital investment dollars for children's museum's across the state and to seek your support for HF2185. This bill would appropriate a total of \$31 million from the General Fund for capital improvements at each of our 10 member sites. Together our children's museums serve children and families from all of Minnesota's 87 counties and beyond. Beginning at birth, children's museums provide a safe and respectful space for play-filled learning experiences that foster healthy development.

As part of the overall bill, Great River Children's Museum is seeking \$7 million from the state to renovate and expand a nearly 100 year old facility that was donated to us by a generous local business. Over \$10 million has been raised in private gifts for this project already, showcasing the need and the value that Central Minnesota's constituents place on, and the great need for, community assets like GRCM that serve children and families. We are located right in the heart of downtown St. Cloud, one of the most diverse cities in the state with over 50 languages spoken in the local school district. Constituents in St. Cloud are acutely aware of how valuable public spaces are in that they offer opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. The richness of cross-cultural connections combined with multilayered interactive play experiences are proven to reduce inequities between advantaged and disadvantaged children. For many children, especially those in our most outlying rural settings, a field trip to Great River Children's Museum may be their only chance to be exposed to a multitude of cultures while experiencing the joy of immersive, dynamic and inclusive play environments. Over the last three years, Great River Children's Museum has engaged with over 10,000 kids and their caring adults across the Central Minnesota region. With state support to complete the construction phase of our project, we will continue to enrich lives and become the center of many cherished memories for generations to come.

I encourage you to support HF2185 as an investment in children's museums as economic drivers, as vital precursors to K-12 education, and as foundational to the mental health and wellbeing of Minnesota's kids and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cassandra Miles'.

Cassandra Miles, Executive Director
cassie.miles@greatrivercm.org
320-200-4110 ext 101





3/15/2023

Honorable Representative Fue Lee
Chair, Capital Investments Committee
State Capitol , Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Lee and House Capital Investment Committee Members,

As a member of the Greater Minnesota Children's Museum Coalition, The Village Children's Museum in Willmar, MN is dedicated to ensuring Minnesota's children can engage in meaningful open-ended play opportunities. The power of play is so necessary the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognize play as a right for EVERY child. The Village, like our 9 partner museums across the state dedicates its existence to developing future Minnesotans through engaging, play-based, exhibits that grow stable relationships in our communities. We provide equitable play opportunities which is critical in the development of a child's brain, engaging them in learning how to learn.

Since its inception, The Village Children's Museum has focused on the whole child and community. We are a cultural center connecting the dynamic, multicultural tapestry that is West Central Minnesota. We have families from a variety of cultures represented in our membership and these families seek us out for information and assistance. We serve our members by sharing community resources to fill financial, social and emotional needs. These conversations often take place in multiple languages English, Spanish, Somali, Hindu, American Sign Language, Ukrainian, Hmong, and Karen among others. While parents share and learn, children play, sowing the seeds of acceptance as partners and peers, reinforcing our community's dedication to cultural acceptance and diversity.

This important work is essential to the success of our community, and our current site does not allow room for the growth our program needs to continue serving our community. Our 2.5-million-dollar capital investment appropriation request benefits not only our 5 county service area with a population of nearly 80,000 people, but also the families and children in the more 20 counties statewide who seek out the opportunities The Village provides. Transportation to these spaces is sometimes difficult in rural MN, this appropriation ensures equal opportunities for rural families to access high-quality educational spaces. We will use this appropriation to purchase property featuring a 15,000 sq ft exhibit space. We will design updates, including adding a space tailored to play-based learning for older children. Other needs identified in our build out plan include connection rooms for community groups and parents, HVAC and roofing replacements, exterior and interior renovations and exhibit design and installation.

I humbly ask you to support the needs of the children and families in our community, by supporting The Village Children's Museum through Capital Investment Cash Appropriation HF 2185 which provides equitable access to high-quality, play-based learning throughout Greater Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Lynsey Pierce
Director, The Village Children's Museum
Willmar, MN



March 15, 2023

To our Minnesota Legislatures:

I am writing in support of HF2185 being submitted on behalf of children's museum across the state. These dollars are an investment in the early education of Minnesotans, livability of our state, as well as a fun, safe place for young kids and families. These museums play an important role in cultural experiences and opportunities for their communities and visitors.

Since 1997, the Children's Discovery Museum of Grand Rapids has been providing fun, educational, and interactive exhibits for the kids and families of Northeastern Minnesota, reaching nearly 80,000 students and teachers from a 10-county area. Our museum worked hard to raise funds to purchase a .6-acre lot adjacent to the museum as well as funds for Judy Garland's House Preservation Project. The \$1.3 million capital investment request includes purchase of additional property behind the museum, create highly requested outdoor spaces, rehabilitate existing museum spaces, and adding a small expansion to support museum programs.

Children's museums are area attractions that promote learning through play, making them a viable amenity for a community that draws visitors and stimulates the local economy. It is essential that these resources be kept up to date, refreshed and expanded to meet the demands and opportunities for residents and visitors. Since COVID, people are seeking off the beaten places in smaller American communities, like the Judy Garland and Children's Discovery Museum. There is a strong sense of community and value for American History and culture in post COVID. Children and families are eager to get out of the home to explore and learn; making these capital investment projects timely.

I support these children museum capital investment requests for bill HF2185. If I can provide any further information or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me at 218-208-9512 or email me at janie.heiz@cdmkids.org.

Sincerely,

Janie Heitz
Executive Director
Judy Garland Children's Museum

Ray Nikkel
Board President
Judy Garland Children's Museum



DULUTH CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

March 15, 2023

Dear Representative Brand,

I am writing you today in support of HF 2185 appropriating funding for capital improvements for children's museums throughout Greater Minnesota. Children's Museums are vital education and community centers as well as economic drivers for the communities they serve.

As part of this appropriation request, the Duluth Children's Museum is seeking \$1.3 million to complete the renovation of its new building in Duluth's Lincoln Park neighborhood. Founded in 1930, DCM is the 5th oldest Children's Museum in the U.S. and the oldest in Minnesota. In our 90 year history, this location is the first DCM has owned, a major step towards long term sustainability. While we have completed and opened the first floor to the community, attendance and the needs of the community have already far outgrown this space and expansion into the rest of the building is absolutely vital.

This capital improvement request will allow DCM and our nine counterparts to move our projects forward, an investment that will serve Minnesota's children for another 90 years and beyond.

Sincerely,



Cameron Kruger
President/CEO
Duluth Children's Museum



WonderTrek

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

March 16, 2023

RE: HF2185

The WonderTrek Children's Museum leadership team strongly encourages your support for HF2185.

The \$4,700,000 requested for the project is critical at this juncture. It will allow us to move forward with the design and construction for the first phase. The museum has secured a 9 acre piece of property easily accessed by highway 371 and 210.

The monies will be designated for the 9 acre parcel of land that will include a 2000 square foot indoor-outdoor classroom and 4 acres of nature play exhibits, outdoor recreation and education. In addition monies will be used for infrastructure, site improvements and landscaping.

The second phase of the project will complete the 27,000 square foot museum facility.

In the past two years WonderTrek has received legacy funding and local grants to provide museum programs within the five county area. To date we have interacted with over 10,000 children in five counties. Our programs are provided off site and at our small Play Lab in Brainerd. At our last Play Lab event we had 67 children in attendance, as you can imagine it was quite full! We have seen continuous growth in attendance.

In light of the number of children that have been impacted and the continuous growth in attendance. The need for a Children's Museum in the region is critical. Families and children in our rural areas now have an opportunity to participate in a children's museum that is easily accessible.

Thank you for your time in reviewing the information and building awareness for children's museums that are accessible for all in the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Maria Prozinski

Maria Prozinski - Executive Director - WonderTrek Children's Museum

mariaprozinsk@wondertrekmuseum.org