**Letter from Patricia Joy, Parent**

Hello legislators. My name is Patricia Joy. I've been gifted the invaluable opportunity for our family to benefit from childcare assistance and Early Childhood education.

I am single parent of four outstanding individuals. My oldest is an adult and on his own. My three younger children and I have no family members in this state as a source of support, but our Early Childhood center has become our family and support.

Because of ECE I really truly believe m y children have had better grades and a level of learning they would never have had. ABCs, 123s, socialization all are positive outcomes from being in Early Childhood Education. Through ECE my children have not only learned academic and social skills, but have also had opportunities to do things for the community. Even the kids who are now too old to be in ECE still demonstrate that desire to serve. They are giving back; my now 14 year old daughter will be speaker for United Way campaign, and has served as a child ambassador in Minnesota.

The reality is if I hadn’t had childcare I wouldn’t be where I’m at. I am a single parent and the ECE has given me parental skills, a safe, happy environment where my children are nurtured, cared for…I wouldn’t be able to function without them being in this environment. We have been a part of ECE for over 14 years. The kids are now excelling and essential contributors to the community…the older ones are looking forward to college and giving back. Alea was a daycare baby and now has great grades and excels at socializing with peers.

The YW has been my family. They have allowed me to build healthy relationships as I defeat mental health issues and maintain my sobriety. I am a huge contributor to my community. I had no one to support me and believe in me, but they did. I am now clean and working but could not do this without the assistance provided for ChildCare and my Early Childhood Education center, the YWCA of Minneapolis.

To know my kids are happy even though I once had good jobs and lost it all due to mental health and alcoholism, that the YWCA has given them that support and a strong foundation is priceless. The YW staff are non-judgmental…they get boots, baby wipes, etc for me… they meet my needs before I even know something is even available. I work hard and do my part, but would be lost without this support.

I appeal to you to take note that my ONE family, would not be able to reach the goals we have surpassed without having quality, affordable childcare.

My children have been enriched as individuals through marked improvements in school grades, in their self-esteem, and an instilled desire to contribute to their community. I have been able to get clean and sober and find work. Please do not cut funds for the Basic Sliding Fee program.