



children's defense fund minnesota

Dear Chair Noor and Members of the Committee:

As you begin your deliberations on the House Omnibus Workforce bill (HF 1342), **we want to thank you for assembling a bill that supports working families and youth.**

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota is committed to ensuring every Minnesota child has a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For this reason **we are especially pleased to see the bill include Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance and access to Unemployment Insurance for youth in high school.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues its devastating impact on Minnesota's economy, CDF-MN has been focused on making sure none of our working families, youth and children are left behind in the state response and that as we recover we build on the best changes made during the emergency to create a state where everyone can thrive. Within that framework, we appreciate that the Committee recognizes the important role youth play in our state economy and the economy of their families. **Many of the young people who lose their jobs are supporting families (as a parent themselves or part of an extended family where all contribute), are independent or are investing in their economic prospects by working their way through school. We thank you for treating these youth as we do other workers under Unemployment Insurance law with inclusion of HF 1034.**

We face triple challenges as a state -- revealed and exacerbated by COVID-- racial inequality, economic insecurity and public health. Paid Family and Medical Leave is one of the most important measures the state can take to address all three. COVID demonstrated the critical importance of public safety nets when unexpected health events happen and how uneven access to a safety net compounds disparities. As Co-Chairs of the Minnesotans for Paid Family and Medical Leave coalition, we want to thank the committee for incorporating the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance program (HF 1200) in the bill and recognizing the important role this program can play in advancing racial equity, health disparities and economic security and stability for working families and businesses alike.

Thank you for your work to advance a budget that supports youth and working families and ensures a bright future for them and the state of Minnesota.

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