

March 14, 2022

Representative Tina Liebling
Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee

Rep. Liebling and Members of Health Finance and Policy Committee:

We are writing in strong support of HF 4099: Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program. As co-chairs of the Community Solutions Advisory (CSA) Council, we have seen how our innovative processes and new approaches to funding have impacted children, families, and their communities across Minnesota.

Over the past three years, the Community Solutions Grant Program has effectively supported early childhood opportunities elevating community wisdom, local lived experiences, and other cultural assets. The funding requested by all applicants for two years totaled \$11,590,981, however the amount of funding available was only \$3,500,000. Out of 46 applicants, 23 organizations were funded. All these organizations received less than they requested. It was a difficult decision for us as a council, and even more difficult for grantees who had to redesign and implement their projects with fewer resources.

The CSA Council has continued to provide support to grantees in the form of advocating for a more equitable and streamlined grants process and providing feedback on evaluation. The council also shares learnings within and across other state agencies as part of the Preschool Development Grant. The collaboration allows for more equitable practices, greater synergy, and deeper learning.

The Community Solutions Grant Program represents more than money. It is also recognition that communities of color, American Indian communities, and geographically dispersed communities have invaluable knowledge, and must be active and valued participants within the creation of solutions for their communities.

We support HF 4099 because we believe it is a strategy that:

- progresses systemic change to address inequities
- amplifies the innovative solutions that leverage culturally appropriate community assets
- centers the experiences and dignity of those most impacted

We strongly encourage you to support HF 4099. The collective health and prosperity of our state is tied to ensuring every child has what is needed to thrive.

Betty Emarita and Ying Lee

Co-Chairs of Community Solutions Advisory Council