



Representative Dave Pinto  
Chair, Early Childhood Finance & Policy Committee  
503 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 5, 2022

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

States are facing a rising crisis of at-risk young children and families. <sup>1</sup> In 2017, foster care caseloads rose in 39 states. Family homelessness is a persistent problem, especially in high market cities and states, with families making up one-third of the homeless population. The opioid crisis has contributed to new cases of childhood trauma —a condition already greater than two times more elevated among children living in poverty.

Head Start and Early Head Start (collectively referred to as “Head Start”) are comprehensive birth to five programs specifically designed to strengthen families, promote school readiness, and improve child health. Minnesota invests just over \$25 million each year (\$50 million over two years) to expand access to Early Head Start (and Head Start) for at-risk children, including tribal and rural communities. In the most recent year, 1,078 infants and toddlers were served with state funding.

Persistent childhood poverty, paired with rising rates of foster care and other factors make Head Start and Early Head Start more important than ever as a tool to help at-risk children and families. Community-based and proven to work, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are ready to help more at-risk children and families in your state.

Stronger Families in Early Head Start have more positive parent-child relationships, more stable and healthy homes, and less child welfare involvement. Improved Health Head Start children are more likely to have hearing and vision screening, be covered by health insurance, receive dental care, and be immunized. Economic Self-Sufficiency In the most recent program year, more than 128,000 Head Start parents advanced an educational level and over 67,000 received job training.

We hope you will continue to expand access to Head Start throughout Minnesota and look forward to working with you to include additional funding into the state budget.

Thank you for your support,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy Frelund".

Stacy Frelund  
American Heart Association  
Regional Team Lead (MN, IA, WI)