



Dear Members of the House Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy Committee:

**As you begin your consideration of HF 1034, we appreciate the opportunity to share our strong support** for this proposal to improve the fairness and effectiveness of Minnesota's Unemployment Insurance system.

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 urge the Committee to recognize 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.** The current UI policy that denies benefits to enrolled high school students creates the potential unintended consequence and perverse incentive for students that must support themselves or their families to drop-out of school – resulting in a cascade of negative outcomes for them, their families and the state.

**During the pandemic Minnesota eventually joined the vast majority of states in allowing enrolled high school students, who would otherwise be eligible, access to Unemployment Insurance and federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.** This meant Minnesota's economy and striving young people were able to access this benefit that is vital to their own and the state's economic recovery. **Now it is time to treat these youth as we do other workers and make this change permanent in state law with the passage HF 1034.**

Minnesota has been working hard to address economic disparities that are among the worst in the nation. **We know overall that communities of color have been disproportionately affected by unemployment both during the pandemic and beyond, youth are no exception.** Denying youth this support jeopardizes hard won gains and critical economic stability for youth, their families, and the state. CDF-MN 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.** Join us in making sure youth are not left behind as we continue to build a state where all can thrive with the support of a fair and equitable Unemployment Insurance system.

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