



April 6, 2021

The Honorable Dave Pinto
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
503 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee:

Thank you for your work to craft an omnibus early childhood bill (HF 2230) that prioritizes the needs of Minnesota's youngest learners and expands access to quality childcare and early education programs to additional low-income families. High-quality early education programs have been shown to improve school readiness, reduce grade retention and special education, and increase high school graduation rates and college enrollment.

For the Minnesota Business Partnership, one of the highlights of HF 2230 is increased support for early learning scholarships that will serve additional families throughout Minnesota. However, while the bill provides expanded state funding for early learning scholarships, **we strongly encourage the committee to reconsider using federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to support early learning scholarships.** The early learning scholarship model is based on research, with independent evaluations that show the model works for families and children. The state has made great strides towards providing scholarships to eligible families, and we need to continue making progress by utilizing federal funding for scholarships to help even more low-income families access quality early learning programs.

The Minnesota Business Partnership also supports several other items in HF 2230, including: 1) increasing reimbursement rates for the Child Care Assistance Program (however, we agree with the Early Care and Education Crisis Work Group that strides should be made to link funding increases to quality program ratings and kindergarten readiness best practices); 2) evaluation of Parent Aware; and 3) statewide implementation and public reporting on the Kindergarten Entrance Assessment.

Again, thank you for your work on behalf of Minnesota's youngest learners. As conversations on early childhood progress, we ask that you support utilization of federal funding for early learning scholarships so additional low-income families with young children can utilize scholarships to access quality early education programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amy Walstien'.

Amy Walstien
Education Policy and Workforce Development Director
Minnesota Business Partnership