



City of Rochester
201 4th Street SE - STE 281
Rochester, MN 55904-3782

Phone: 507-328-2700
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February 9, 2023

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing this letter in support of The Children's Museum of Rochester's bills, [HF1024](#) and [SF 0726](#). The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc, doing business as SPARK, is in Economic Development Region 10 of Southeast Minnesota. They serve a population of 519,399 people in this region, according to 2021 MN State Demographic Center.

These bills seek to provide funding that builds upon successful initiatives funded with previous appropriations from the arts and cultural heritage fund. This funding would increase access and engagement for diverse audiences through museum programs and exhibits that promote Minnesota arts, culture, and history. Funding children's museums this session will direct resources to impact children, families, and our Southeast Minnesota communities when it's needed more than ever.

At their core, children's museums are about serving ALL children with high-quality learning experiences and supportive resources. They are indispensable educational, cultural, and economic development assets that understand the needs of our youngest citizens, they strengthen the bonds between families and their communities, spur economic development, and improve Minnesota's rural quality of life.

Your support will have a statewide impact because Rochester's Children's Museum, SPARK, has served visitors from every single county in Minnesota this past year. They are poised to reach more than 100,000 visitors this year, serving their local residents and area visitors. State funding to support SPARK will provide direct resources to the needs of children, families, and their communities, and expand their capacity and increase long-range impact and improve Greater Minnesota's livability for generations to come.

I encourage you to lend your support and leadership in passing HF1024 and SF0726 for the Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kim Norton'.

Kim Norton, Mayor
City of Rochester, Minnesota
(507) 328-2700
knorton@rochestermn.gov



February 8, 2023

To whom it may concern:

It is with great pleasure that we write a letter of support for SPARK. Both Head Start and School Readiness have benefited from partnering with SPARK over the past few years.

Each year, we have been able to collaborate in planning events for both Head Start and School Readiness children and their families. These events have ranged from casual gatherings with open museum play to structured events with meals, stations for learning and parent education. The benefit families receive from our partnership with SPARK is huge because it fosters a love of learning through play.

SPARK has implemented many programs over the years to help make their programming equitable and accessible to all families in our community. In years past, many of the families enrolled in our programs have been able to qualify for free yearly memberships or opportunities to return and play on their own time with a coupon. In addition, SPARK offers "Free First Sundays" where admission is free to all. This allows families to bring their children back to learn and explore after our events have concluded.

Having SPARK in our community is so important because it allows children to play and learn in a safe and fun environment. Research shows that play is essential to learning in the early years. We need to continue to foster opportunities allowing all children a way to feel a part of our community.

We appreciate your consideration of support for SPARK.

Sincerely,



Jillayne Schuder
Head Start Family and Community
Engagement Manager



Amanda Lacek
School Readiness Coordinator



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ally Hanten Ebert

2/8/2023

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To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing this letter in support for SPARK'S (The Children's Museum of Rochester) inclusive programming and access for all request. Jeremiah Program-Rochester-SE MN's mission is to disrupt generational poverty for single mothers and their children, two generations at a time. We do this with a hyperfocus on education for both moms and their children. Like SPARK and their mission, Jeremiah Program-Rochester-SE MN understands the importance of play for our children's learning. It is the primary tool in which they learn to navigate their world, problem solve, and have fun! With this programming, our families will help foster more inclusive communities through access to cultural programming.

We believe that inter-cultural learning really should be for all and are grateful for our continued partnership with SPARK in helping our JP families unlock the power of play.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ally Hanten Ebert

Executive Director

Jeremiah Program-Rochester-SE M

Senator Carla Nelson

Senate District 26

Chair, Taxes
3235 MN Senate Building
95 University Ave. West

Office: 651-296-4848
Email: sen.carla.nelson@senate.mn



Senate

State of Minnesota

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for the Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc., whose mission is to provide compelling and interacting experiences that engage people of all ages in the joy of play, the power of learning, and a sense of community.

The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc is actively combating the play deficit facing today's youth by encouraging parents to understand the value of lifelong skills children develop when they engage in imaginative, open-ended play. The museum provides tools and resources that help make learning more visible for adult guests, offering practical tips for extending their children's learning - both in the museum and beyond.

In the past year, the Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc. has been building capacity and piloting programs to serve an increasingly diverse population facing multiple barriers. Through key partnerships with community nonprofits, the museum shares information about early childhood development through play and provides parents with tools to support playful learning in the museum and at home. Through play, children learn key skills for success now and into the future, and the museum ensures that families facing financial instability have access to developmentally rich, playful learning. As an educator and advocate for hands-on learning, I see first-hand how the museum impacts our community. The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc. helps engage and support families in our community as their child's first teachers and is designed to lay the foundation for later learning, academic, and career success.

The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc. provides focus areas that help all children in the community address the importance of social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning that include persistence, self-direction, critical thinking, and problem solving. The time is now to invest in our children's education and those community resources, like the children's museum, that are improving health, education, and disparities. Thank you for your consideration of my support of the Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact at 651-296-4848.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carla Nelson".

Carla Nelson



February 10, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc.'s bills, [HF1024](#) and [SF 0726](#). The Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc. is also known as SPARK.

As a parent, and as the Executive Director of Cradle 2 Career MN (C2C), I see first-hand the benefits that SPARK offers our community. When children engage in exhibits and quality educational programs offered at SPARK, they are working toward developmental milestones recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, as well as current state and national academic standards. Engagement at SPARK also promotes school readiness, which is one of our goals at C2C, by focusing on early literacy, beginning math and science concepts, the development of planning and problem-solving skills, cooperation, self-esteem and self-discipline, and physical coordination.

Funding children's museums this session will direct resources to impact children, families, and our Southeast Minnesota communities when it's needed more than ever. These bills seek to provide funding that builds upon successful initiatives funded with previous appropriations from the arts and cultural heritage fund. This funding would increase access and engagement for diverse audiences through museum programs and exhibits that promote Minnesota arts, culture, and history.

We encourage you to lend your support and leadership in passing HF1024 and SF0726 for SPARK, the Children's Museum of Rochester, Inc.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Julie Ruzek".

Julie Ruzek
Executive Director
Cradle 2 Career MN
Julier@c2cmn.com
903 W Center St., Suite 160
Rochester, MN 55902