



Chair Pinto and Members of the House Children & Families Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Walz Flanagan commitment to making Minnesota the best place in the country to be a child and their whole child, whole family transformational budget proposal design to move Minnesota forward on achieving that goal.

The breadth and depth of the combined proposals represents the large scale of what we need to ensure every child and family, regardless of their race, ethnicity or zip code, can thrive. The future of our state depends on it. Given the many worthy parts of the budget, it is dangerous to lift up just a few but **we would like to call out some of the big, bold ones that we can and must do now given our historic budget surplus:**

- A nation-leading **state child tax credit that reduces child poverty** and its life long negative impacts by 25%.
- **A new Department of Children, Youth and Families that is the foundation for coordinating state programs to work much better** for children, families and those that provide services to them.
- A statewide **Paid Family and Medical Leave program that ensures families are not economically destabilized during challenging life events** like the arrival of a new child or a cancer diagnosis.
- **Unprecedented investments in childcare and early learning** that move the Great Start for All Minnesota Children north star recommendations forward to ensure affordability for parents, quality for children and living wages for providers.
- **Turning pandemic era innovations and lessons about how to best support children and families into long-term change**, including: reductions in red-tape and improved economic stability for 43,000 children on MFIP; continuous MA coverage to age six for the half of Minnesota children served by the program; and school meals for every child in the state.
- **Significant investments in community-generated solutions so we can capitalize on all the strengths in our Black, Indigenous and other communities color** to better address Minnesota's opportunity gaps that are among the worst in the nation.

We must think big to realize the full potential of our state and the Walz Flanagan budget encourages us to do just that in 2023. **We hope the legislature will be similarly audacious** in centering children and families as budgets are finalized over the next few months.

Sincerely,

Debra Fitzpatrick
Director of Policy and Research