



GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA  
553 Fairview Ave. N., St. Paul, MN 55104

May 2, 2023

Dear Chair Hassan, Chair Champion, and Members of the Jobs and Labor Conference Committee:

As the Conference Committee enters its deliberations, we want to call out the importance of supporting fathers in the lives of their children. The FATHER Project helps low-income dads secure jobs, train for advancement, and move into careers as they become positive, productive workers and nurturing parents. We also provide guidance for dads who are managing legal and criminal justice obligations.

As trusted community partners, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota, Family Service Rochester, and our partners have a solid track record of meeting community needs and being good stewards of the state's resources. With additional investment in the FATHER Project, we will be able to serve 500+ dads and their children per year across the state.

Together, we have helped to create successful programming available to fathers throughout Minnesota, not just in the metro but also in St. Cloud, Rochester and surrounding communities. In each community we have forged strong partnerships with local employers, as well as other service agencies to create solutions in helping low-income fathers support their children financially and connect with them emotionally. Our shared outcomes are strong. In the past year, 75 dads have obtained employment at an average wage of \$19.12 per hour. The program is solidly positioned to grow to meet the needs of even more dads in the coming years.

We thank you for including funding for the FATHER Project in both the Senate and House Omnibus Bills. As the committee finalizes the conference report, we ask that you include the \$2 million currently set aside by both bodies for the biennium for fatherhood programming so that we can better meet the needs of dads across the state. Now is the time for Minnesota to provide dedicated support to fathers, particularly low-income, non-custodial fathers served at the FATHER Project, many of whom are men of color. These men continue to face systematic barriers to their ability to support their children. The FATHER Project can be part of the solution, but only with the critical resources needed to serve.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michael Wirth-Davis in blue ink.

Michael Wirth-Davis, D.P.A.  
President and CEO  
Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota

Handwritten signature of Scott Maloney in blue ink.

Scott Maloney  
Executive Director  
Family Service Rochester