

March 9, 2022

RE: Minnesota's Early Childhood Governance System

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

As early care and educators, advocates, funders, small businesses, and parents, we appreciate your continued focus on early childhood governance issues. We believe the state must reorganize the myriad of early care and education programs and the *best option* is a new cabinet level department that consolidates Minnesota's early care and learning programs

Minnesota is ready for this change. We have studied and discussed the issue for well over a decade. The science demonstrating the importance of early childhood development, as well as the economic case for prioritizing early childhood investments have both been well established. Since that time, early care and learning programs have grown more complicated while remaining spread out between multiple state agencies.

We appreciate the recent report issued by The Governor's Children's Cabinet and the Management Analysis and Development division of the Office of Management and Budget. The report analyzed state-level governance for early childhood programs in Minnesota and lays out several reorganization options to consider. While we agree with the report that more logistical steps are necessary to determine exactly how Minnesota would create a new cabinet level department, we think pursuing any other strategy would move us further away from our shared goals.

We recognize that changes to Minnesota's early childhood governance system alone will not fix all the issues facing early childhood care and education. But we believe a new department is necessary to provide early childhood programs with the leadership and attention they deserve. We know so much more about human development than we did 20 or even 10 years ago. It is past time we have government structured in such a way to reflect that knowledge and prioritize our youngest minds.

Minnesota's early childhood programs require a unified vision and administrative home. A new agency would reflect a modernized approach to state government and would make a cabinet-level official accountable for ensuring every Minnesotan has access to enriching care and education from the time they are born until the day they reach kindergarten.

We look forward to continuing to engage with policy makers and all stakeholders to move towards establishing the governance structure that all young children in Minnesota deserve.

Sincerely:

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Government Relations Chair
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