



# children's defense fund minnesota

Dear Chairs Benson, Liebling, Schultz and Abeler and Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee:

As you weigh the opportunities within the Omnibus Health and Human Services bills, **we want to thank you for your hard work and provide some suggestions for assembling a conference committee report that addresses a number of important challenges and opportunities identified by parents, youth and children across the state and consistent with our mission** to ensure *every* Minnesota child has a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

Based on our mission and family feedback, we support the following provisions:

- **Both House and Senate investments in the 64,000 children -- half of them under 6, the most critical period of child development -- on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.** We appreciate new ongoing support for these children in the form of an increase in the Housing Allowance and a Cost-of-Living Increase, as well as the one-time emergency supports necessary to recover from the pandemic.
- The House proposal **to simplify income support program administration, reduce mandatory monthly paper-based reports and prospective budgeting for families participating in MFIP (based on standard procedures in all other states).** CDF-MN has partnered with state agencies and legislators to make our public programs more efficient for families and agencies; if adopted, these changes would decrease complexity and help close the gap between where our most over-burdened and under-resourced families are and need to be, improving economic and home stability for the thousands of children each year.
- **Both a House and Senate focus on maternal and child health:** we urge inclusion of expanded access to Medicaid for 12 months post-partum; Dignity in Child Birth provisions to require training on implicit bias in the health system; funding for the Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancy Program, Paid Family and Medical Leave, as well as a fix for the Minnesota Care family glitch and a study on a public buy-in option (ideally to include access for undocumented children at the minimum).
- **Both House and Senate improvements and additional investments in the Child Care Assistance Program, a foundational two-generation support that advances family economic stability and child well-being.** We support use of federal funds to increase the CCAP provider rate at the House position of the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, reprioritize the Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) wait-list to ensure new families have access and then with these measures in place additional funding for the BSF program.

We look forward to working with you to advance a conference committee report that allows all children to thrive in economically stable households, ensuring a bright future for them and the state.

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