



February 18, 2022

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

1450 ENERGY PARK DRIVE
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
55108-5218

Re: Letter of Support for Parents In Community Action, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern:

As a representative of Metropolitan State University, I am lending my support to Parents In Community Action, Inc. (PICA) in seeking funding to expand its Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School. Metro State is a long-time collaborative partner of PICA in assisting with the agency's in-house teacher credentialing program and in getting their teachers started on the path toward earning a college degrees in early childhood education or a related field. Training, education, and workforce development have *always* played a major role in PICA's programming for low-income parents and PICA has been highly successful in giving these parents an opportunity to learn, to become employed, and to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Metro State awards PICA's parent trainees, who are low-income parents and mostly people of color, college credits for successfully earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential in PICA's in-house CDA training program, which has been offered by PICA since 1976. This encourages parents to further their education by pursuing a college degree, and Metro State is excited to be involved in this worthwhile partnership. We have seen many PICA parents complete their bachelor's degrees, some of whom go on to earn advanced degrees as well.

By expanding PICA's capability to train more parents, who then go on to educate young children and contribute to the health of our local economy, you will be making an investment in the future of our community. PICA is committed to providing educational and workforce development opportunities for economically disadvantaged parents and community members; by expanding its Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School, PICA will be able to extend these capabilities to serve even more low-income parents *and* their children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance (651-999-5829). Thank you for your consideration of PICA's application.

Sincerely,

Heidi Frankard, Ph.D.
Psychology Professor
Early Childhood Studies Director
Metropolitan State University

TEL: 651.999.5820
TTY: 651.772.7687

www.metrostate.edu



February 18, 2022

Re: Letter of Support for Parents In Community Action, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern:

As a long-time collaborative partner of Parents In Community Action, Inc. (PICA), I am writing in support of PICA's proposed remodeling and expansion of its Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School. I can attest that PICA has the background, the experience, and the capacity to carry out the proposed project successfully.

La Crèche Early Childhood Centers, Inc. has partnered with PICA since 2016 in its successful Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership program, which is designed to assist child care agencies in improving the quality of care and services provided to infants and toddlers and their families. Our La Crèche teachers receive training and hands-on experience in PICA's existing Early Head Start Lab School classrooms under the supervision of experienced PICA teachers, who provide expert guidance, mentoring, and follow up to ensure that our teachers are providing the highest quality services for infants and toddlers. This program has not only improved the quality of our teaching staff, benefiting both children and their families, but also demonstrated the effectiveness of PICA's Lab School concept.

Expanding PICA's Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School is a worthy project that will reap benefits for teachers, for the children taught by those teachers, and their families. As all involved are primarily low-income persons of color, this project will be of significant benefit to the community as well, producing more highly trained teachers of color and improving the school readiness of young children.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please feel free to contact me at 612-377-1786.

Sincerely,

La Crèche Early Childhood Centers, Inc.

Phyllis J. Sloan
Executive Director



NHSA's mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

Re: Letter of Support – Parents In Community Action, Inc.

Dear Funder:

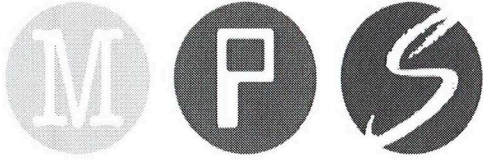
As Deputy Director for Community Engagement and Innovation at the National Head Start Association (NHSA) and former Director of the Office of Head Start (OHS), I wish to lend my support to the request of Parents In Community Action, Inc. (PICA) for funding to support the remodeling and expansion of its Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School.

PICA has long been an innovator and a leader in the education and training of low-income parents of children enrolled in its Head Start and Early Head Start programs. In fact, PICA was featured in *Two Generations Together*, a case study report released by the National Head Start Association (NHSA) in partnership with Ascend at the Aspen Institute, highlighting the exceptional efforts of Head Start programs in designing effective two-generation solutions aimed at enabling families to achieve their own goals for education, employment, stability, and success. The case study emphasizes the success of PICA's in-house Parent Training Programs, which provide parents with the skills needed to be successful in both the home and work environments and to achieve economic stability and self-sufficiency for their families.

PICA's commitment to training Head Start parents and its innovative approaches to doing so cannot be overstated. Awarding funding that will help PICA to expand these training efforts will allow PICA to continue empowering low-income families to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Bergeron, Deputy Director for Community Engagement and Innovation
National Head Start Association



MINNEAPOLIS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Urban Education. Global Citizens.

Early Childhood Special Education
Wilder School
3320 Elliot Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407
Phone: 612.668.5100

Kristen L. Geiger
Director
Special Education Programs
Early Childhood Special Education
612-668-5103
(612) 668-5100

February 18, 2022

Re: Letter of Support for PICA

To Whom it May Concern:

As Director of Special Education Programs for the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), I am intimately familiar with Parents In Community Action, Inc. (PICA) and its commitment to the children and families of Minneapolis and its surrounding communities; therefore, I am pleased to write in support of PICA's request for funding to remodel its Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School.

MPS is a long-time partner in providing early intervention services and early childhood special education services to PICA Head Start children, as well as speech and language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and vision services. Throughout our years of working with PICA, we have experienced a high level of commitment and professionalism, and we have also observed the comprehensive nature of the services provided to families by PICA, including education, training, and support for *parents* as well as for their children.

PICA is well known and well respected in the local early childhood community, and as a representative of MPS, I can state that MPS strongly supports expanding PICA's reach and its capability to serve additional children, families, and educators with the proposed renovation and expansion of its Training Center facility. PICA improves the quality and diversity of education *and* educators in the Hennepin County community and primes our most vulnerable community members for success.

Thank you in advance for considering PICA's request. If I can help in any other way, please feel free to contact me at 612-668-5100.

Sincerely,

Kristen L. Geiger
Director of Special Education Programs
Minneapolis Public Schools Early Childhood Special Education Program



Teaching, Learning and Leadership Department

240 Heritage Hall
P.O. Box 790
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790
715.232.1663 Phone

February 18, 2022

Re: Letter of Support for Parents in Community Action, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of support for PICA Head Start. I have worked, volunteered, consulted, and supported PICA Head Start for over 19 years. I strongly endorse the remodeling and expansion of the Workforce Development Training Center and Lab School. The training center works with the community and PICA staff and parents to promote learning, inclusivity, equity, and diversity.

As a professor of Early Childhood Education and the Multiculturalism Program at the University of Wisconsin – Stout, I collaborate with PICA Head Start to place my students as volunteers in the program. Our university requires learning opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills working with children and adults from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Last semester I had four students who volunteered for 30 hours so that they could gain more knowledge and teaching practice within a diverse school. Here is a reflection from one student who volunteered at PICA: “This experience was so eye opening because I grew up in small predominantly white schools. I learned the value of diversity and learned that there are many ways one can encourage multiculturalism in the classroom.”

The University of Wisconsin-Stout is in Menomonie, WI and borders up to Minnesota. While we are growing in diversity, many of our rural schools reflect a monocultural population. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate each semester with PICA Head Start. The staff provide our students with an experience that prepares them to grow to be culturally sensitive and responsive to all people.

The quality of leadership and innovation that PICA Head Start provides to its families, children, staff, and community is outstanding. They are a model of professionalism. There is no doubt that this project will be successful and lead to further the quality of early childhood programs.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Theresa L. Kohlmeier

Theresa Kohlmeier, PhD
School of Education
Kohlmeiert@uwstout.edu 651-485-6414



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gaylekelly44@gmail.com

March 7, 2022

RE: Letter of Support – Parents in Community Action, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern:

Minnesota's Early Childhood (EC) Workforce is experiencing a critical shortage of qualified workers and professionals that reflect the diversity of Minnesota children. As never before, Minnesota needs to invest in the training infrastructure that will produce a diverse and skilled early learning workforce. For 50 years, Parents in Community Action, Inc. has refined their successful early learning training systems targeting Minnesota's BIPOC communities and prepared hundreds of people to become infant/toddler specialists and preschool teachers. With targeted State investments, PICA can expand their training facilities to bring this quality workforce development opportunities to trainees across Minnesota.

As the former Executive Director for the Minnesota Head Start Association, I advocated for investments in training infrastructure to expand and diversify Minnesota's early childhood workforce. Parents in Community Action, Inc. services were often my model of a high-quality professional development system. Their services range from basic job readiness to apprentice training in EC classrooms, followed by certification and college degree opportunities. In partnership with Metro State University, PICA staff can build their professional credentials while working in the field. PICA's vision for a new state-of-art training facility would allow trainees across Minnesota to experience these opportunities both virtually and face-to-face on their Minneapolis campus. Head Starts across the country have marveled at the quality and diversity of PICA's trained professionals and Minnesota's EC trainees would benefit from expanding these opportunities across the state.

At the heart of PICA's training experience is their ability to engage and involve parents in the work of early learning. Minnesota parents who participate in PICA's job training programs have benefited from new experiences, coaching and financial support to achieve their career goals. This resource of young, diverse families who are looking to launch new careers gives PICA a competitive edge in the workforce development field. The State of Minnesota needs to leverage the PICA model to realize its goals to expand culturally appropriate early care and education services across Minnesota.

Please support State investments in Parents in Community Action's training center proposal. Thank you for your consideration of this legislative proposal.

Sincerely,

Gayle L. Kelly
Retired, Executive Director, Minnesota Head Start Association
904 Valley Drive, Duluth, MN 55804
218-340-0483

My name is Adriana Pasten Díaz and I am a Head Start teacher at Parents In Community Action in Minneapolis. I am here to tell you my story and how my family and I have benefited from PICA. I was born in Mexico and raised by my grandparents. My family at the time consisted of my husband, my daughter and a baby on the way when we moved to Minnesota in 2005. I got a job at a restaurant and one of my co-workers had told me about PICA. I came to PICA in 2008 to inquire about PICA and ended up signing my children up to attend PICA. When I met one of my children's teachers, she immediately told me about becoming a parent trainer not knowing this would be the beginning of my career at PICA.

I started my parent training in 2010 working in the infant and toddler room. While in the infant and toddler room, I learned so much about the development of young children. This experience not only helped me get a glimpse into PICA but it also gave me insight to the development of my own children being a young mom. After completing my 96 hours of parent training, I decided that this was something that I wanted to pursue so I applied to be a parent intern in PICA's intern program working with infants and toddlers. I worked full time in an Early Head Start classroom learning what it takes to be a teacher, how to do a lesson plan and interacting with the children. During this time, as part of the internship I was able to attend PICA's CDA program (Child Development Associate), a nationally credentialed early childhood certificate. This credential includes completing 120 hours of training, 450 hours of classroom experience, writing a portfolio and passing a test.

After completing my CDA and my internship I was hired to be a teacher at PICA. I began my career working in the full day program operating eight hours a day, five days a week, 12 months per year. I also worked in the preschool classroom and the collaborative program. The collaborative program is a program where Minneapolis and PICA staff work together in the classroom teaching children with special needs. I am very lucky to work in a very diverse program where the staff reflects the children and families both in culture and language. Having diverse teachers is very important to me for the children. I wanted my children to be with teachers who look and talk like them. My three children graduated from PICA and they still remember their

experiences and how happy they were knowing that I was working at PICA. They were always excited to go to school and to play with their classmates.

I would also like to point out that I graduated in 2019 from Minneapolis Community and Technical College through PICA, being the first in my family to attain a degree in college. My life has changed so much with being a part of PICA. I would have never thought I would be where I am but because of this career in PICA my family has benefited both financially and culturally. At PICA, we are not only giving a head start to children, but I was given a head start at becoming a teacher in this program where 48% of our staff of nearly 400 are currently or former Head Start parents and 90% are people of color. This level of diversity is very important and needed. As a teacher of color, I see the impact I have with my children in my classroom, being a role model for them. My children had that at PICA and I want that for other children as they continue their education which is why I support PICA Head Start so diverse people can have the same opportunity that I had and to take advantage of all the opportunities that the program offers to families. As a teacher of color and because of the opportunities I was given, I now have the credentials, full time job and security knowing that I have the skills, knowledge and desire to make this world better for children and families. My life story is living proof. Thank you.