



Dear Members of the House Early Childhood Committee:

Kids Can't Wait -- a coalition of nonprofit, faith, child care, and business advocates -- strongly supports the historic and critical Child Care Assistance Program investments included in the Governor's 2022 Supplemental Budget recommendations. These investments would go a long way towards creating a Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program that meets the needs of our providers and families, as well as federal recommendations.

The Child Care Assistance Program is the largest form of child care support for low-income working families with infants and toddlers in Minnesota (and remains available to eligible children up to age 13 for before/after school and summer care). Child Care Assistance helps families secure stable child care while they work toward financial stability via employment or education.

- **The Governor's recommendation provides the ongoing funding necessary to ensure every child and working family that is eligible for the basic sliding fee program receives the support they need to flourish.** Decreased state investments in the Child Care Assistance Basic Sliding Fee program have resulted in children and families ending up on waitlists, sometimes for years. Waitlists are not just bad for children and workers, they are bad for our businesses and our economic recovery. Forecasting the CCAP Basic Sliding Fee program, as the Governor's budget recommends, will eliminate waitlists and streamline administration of the program for families and counties alike.
- **The Governor's budget also returns Minnesota to the provider reimbursement rates in place before the Great Recession, a provider reimbursement rate recommended by the federal government.** Child Care Assistance provider reimbursement rates that are well below market rates for far too many providers jeopardize child care professionals' ability to accept children using Child Care Assistance, to expand or even remain in business and provide the high quality care and education every Minnesota child needs and deserves.
- Finally, we strongly support the Governor's recommendation making **Child Care Assistance Basic Sliding Fee available to foster care families, relative custodians, successor custodians, and guardians.**

Employers and economic development professionals across the state recognize child care as one of their most pressing needs, as many families cannot enter or re-enter the workforce because they cannot find or afford child care. While these proposals take us a long way towards a Child Care Assistance Program our children, families and employers need, Kids Can't Wait looks forward to working with the Governor and Legislators to considering additional opportunities to expand Child Care Assistance access.

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis
Children's Defense Fund Minnesota
ISAIAH/Kids Count on Us
Joint Religious Legislative Coalition
Minnesota Budget Project

Minnesota Child Care Association
MN Prenatal to Three Coalition
Minnesota Alliance of YMCAs
YWCA Minneapolis
LSAP Legal Services Advocacy Project