May 2, 2023

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| The Honorable Melissa WiklundChair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee2107 Minnesota Senate Building90 University AvenueSt. Paul, MN 55155 | The Honorable Tina Liebling Chair, House Health Finance and Policy Committee477 State Office Building100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155 |

Dear Chair Wiklund and Chair Liebling, and members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee:

On behalf of Douglas County Early Childhood Educators and supporters:

 I write to express our support for SF2995, the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill.

In particular, we are appreciative that the bill includes funding to support ongoing maintenance and enhancements to the MN Help Me Connect centralized resource for pregnant and parenting families with young children. Help Me Connect launched in May 2021 in response to assessment findings from families and local providers that identified the need for a trusted, centralized resource that connects to numerous prenatal, early childhood, and family support programs across the state. Since its launch, the site has welcomed over 190,000 unique visitors and provides information to approximately 12,500 programs and services within local communities. Help Me Connect is currently funded by the Preschool Development Grant, which ends December 2023. Funding from this legislative proposal will support the existing system and the development of new features, such as a provider electronic referral mechanism, access to electronic developmental screening, an online chat for families to ask questions, and a toll-free number for individualized support and referrals to community navigators when needed.

Please contact me at 320-219-0349 or email me @ clou54@hotmail.com if I can be of assistance to the committee.

Sincerely, Connie L Fields, Douglas County Early Childhood Initiative Coordinator

Cc: Sen. Jim Abeler, Ranking Minority, Senate Human Services Committee

Sen. Liz Boldon, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Sen. Robert Kupec, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Sen. Kelly Morrison, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Rep. Robert Bierman, Vice Chair, House Health Finance and Policy Committee

Rep. Heather Keeler, Vice Chair, House Children and Families Finance and Policy

Rep. Dave Pinto, Chair, House Children and Families Finance and Policy

Rep. Joe Schomacker, Republican Lead, House Health Finance and Policy Committee

Commissioner Brooke Cunningham, Minnesota Department of Health