

**April 5, 2022**

**In Favor of HF 4735, Early Childhood Committee's Supplemental Budget Bill**

Chair Pinto, Vice Chair Pryor, Lead Franson, and Committee Members,

We represent the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MNAAP) and its Early Childhood Workgroup. We are writing in favor of HF 4735, the House Early Childhood Committee's Supplemental Budget Bill. In these times of historic budget surplus (over \$9 billion), this is the time to give all youngest children and their families the help many need. As has been said, "if not now, when; if not us, who?"

As both democrats and republican agree, despite Minnesota's high aggregate ranking in high school graduation rates, Minnesota also has "worst in the nation" achievement gaps for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in these same rankings. Science of the developing brain is clear: the foundations for success or failure in life are set during pregnancy and the 0-5 years after a baby is born.

Generational poverty in these communities is a path to overwhelming challenges via chronic toxic stress (references 1, 2). Corrective action is at hand by bold use of some of the historic budget surplus.

Improved health and well-being of all Minnesotans can occur through relieving chronic toxic stress during pregnancy and thereafter (ref 3) in all corners of Minnesota by:

- Providing health care from pregnancy through age 20 (P-20) to BIPOC and low income communities, with a focus on the critical P-3 years; including culturally congruent services like Home Visiting Programs and Early Head Start and its home visiting arm.
- Providing paid family and medical leave, especially from P-18, for all Minnesotans. These programs are pro work, pro family (relieve stress), lead to two generation workforce enhancements, and significantly reduce child neglect. (Ref 4)
- Provision of subsidy supports for those in need (up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline), including nutrition (SNAP), housing, adequate financial assistance, support of child care (CCAP) up to the Federal Guideline of 75% of most recent rate survey (mixed delivery system), paid voluntary education (mixed delivery) from age 4 to kindergarten; all without leading to the "benefits cliff" (refs 5, 6). Full funding of Head Start for those eligible through the start of kindergarten is an important caveat.
- Living wages for child care workers (CCWs) and adequate reimbursement for child care providers (CCPs)(mixed delivery); training for CCWs *on the path* to Parent Aware 3 or 4 star ratings. (ref 7)
- Full funding for proven programs resulting in children arriving at KG ready to learn (in Minnesota Early Head Start serves only 20% of eligible children, regular Head Start serves only 50% of eligible children). In addition to Head Start and Early Head Start, proven programs include Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) and Home Visiting Programs targeted to low income and BIPOC families; Reach Out and Read for all 0-5; and Child Care Programs *on path* to 3 and 4 star Parent Aware ratings (mixed delivery) (ref 8). All these programs should have full funding, so no child is left behind
- Eliminate child and parent homelessness in Minnesota. A child cannot do her homework without a stable home. A baby starts learning from his environment from the moment of birth.

- Eliminate the parent illiteracy rate in low income populations (30%)

It has been well documented in testimony that the vast majority of incarcerations stem from the “cradle to prison” pipeline. By fully building out parent and early childhood education “C to P” can be changed to “cradle to college”. (ref 9)

Child development experts have also proven (Gunnar, Shonkoff, others) that calm, interactive, loving nurturing (absence of chronic toxic stress), leads to two generation changes (parent and child) resulting in year after year decreases in poverty and successful and fulfilling lives.

Economists, including Nobel Laureate James Heckman, PhD, University of Chicago and Arthur Rolnick, PhD, retired Head of Research at the Mpls Federal Reserve and now a fellow at the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, have calculated that investing in Early Childhood will result in 10-16% year over year returns over a life course, with the earliest returns occurring by age 4.

It is way past time for the Legislature to act. The 1992 legislation creating the “Children’s Cabinet” had as its mantra “because children can’t wait”. Due to recessions and other factors in the 2000s, the Children’s Cabinet was mothballed and only re established in 2012. It is once again doing all it can to create an accurate picture of the urgency of acting to help parents and young families. As was said in a recent Star Tribune Letter to Editor, “because children can’t wait”. Children have now been waiting 30 years – a whole generation! If money can be taken from this purpose due to recessions, now with the opposite (“once in forever budget surplus”), there can be no excuse for not acting.

Signed

Early Childhood Workgroup of MNAAP

and Doctors for Early Childhood

Dale Dobrin, MD, FAAP

Ada Alden, EdD, Parent Educator and Grad Student Supervisor, U of MN

Mary Meland, MD, FAAP

Roger Sheldon, MD, FAAP

## References

1. M Gunnar, presentation to joint hearing of Early Childhood F and P Committee and Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Committee, April 1, 2022, on preventing toxic stress on the path to developing healthy and safe individuals, families, and communities/society
2. J Shonkoff, Harvard Center for the Developing Child, several You Tube videos and written documents on chronic toxic stress

3. Cynthia Osborne, P-3 Policy Impact Center and States Roadmaps, presentation to University of St Thomas P-3 Policy Forum, April 4, 2022; emphasizing proof that PFL decreases family stress of work-care conflicts, improves family income, pro work (20% increase in female workers), pro family, improves quality and numbers of next gen workforce. Slides and recording available via St Thomas School of SW.
4. Ibid.
5. Kerris Cooper and Kitty Stewart, "Money Matters: Does Money Affect Children's Outcomes? A Systematic Review," Joseph Rountree Foundation, October 2013
6. Kashin, Julie, Cai, Julie. Brown, Hayley, Fremstad, Shawn, "How States Would Benefit if Congress Truly Invested in Child Care and Pre-K" The Century Foundation, March 21, 2022
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. See testimony before House joint hearing 4/1/2022 of Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee and Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Committee – especially testimonies of Dr Megan Gunnar on chronic toxic stress from P-5, Dakota County Sheriff Leslie, Thief River Falls Police Chief Adams, and Corrections Commissioner Schnell.