



April 5, 2022

**RE: SF 4410 Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee
Budget Bill**

Dear Chair Abeler and Members of the Committee:

ISAI AH is a statewide organization comprised of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, and hundreds of community organizations. Our Kids Count on Us Coalition is comprised of over 500 childcare centers and family childcare providers throughout the state serving thousands of families on children between the ages of zero to five. Altogether, the institutions we help organize represent over half a million Minnesotans. Our mission is to enable people to organize for racial, social and economic justice, and build a democracy that respects every person's dignity and a caring economy where everyone can thrive.

We are disappointed in this budget bill because it fails to invest any money in our childcare workforce. Childcare providers and teachers have been hit hard by the pandemic and responded to the call time and time again to be there for our communities. Just as direct care professionals help people with disabilities gain independence in the community, early education professionals are teaching our youngest kids every day the foundational skills they will need to be successful.

Investing in childcare is a workforce issue. These teachers are the workforce behind the workforce – helping ensure long-term care workers can get to their jobs in the nursing homes, groups homes, and assisted living facilities throughout our state. The Governor and the House have proposed investing in increasing rates and expanding access to the childcare assistance program so more families can go to work. Compared to these efforts, the Senate's complete lack of childcare investment is a glaring omission. Simply put - it is leaving kids behind.

SF3379 and SF 3908 are both bipartisan proposals that would help more families access childcare, but neither are included in this bill. And just like this budget bill does for direct care workers, raising childcare assistance rates would help raise the pay of childcare workers, many of whom make less than \$15.00 an hour. Failing to make these investments is shortsighted and will ultimately hurt the people this bill is intended to serve – the healthcare workforce and the people they care for.

We sincerely hope this committee reconsiders its position on childcare investment and shows a commitment to this vital part of our workforce.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director, ISAI AH