



March 2, 2023

Finance Committee
Minnesota Senate

RE: SUPPORT for SF 53 on Early Learning Scholarships and Child Care Stabilization Grants

Dear Chair Marty and Members,

At People Serving People, we work with families experiencing homelessness throughout Hennepin County. Our shelter provides supportive services for families and we operate two 4-star Parent Aware rated early childhood development centers – one on-site at the shelter and the other in the community at our Center of Excellence. In our classrooms, early childhood educators utilize a trauma informed approach that focuses on social and emotional development and executive function skills to prepare kids and families for kindergarten and beyond. **SF 53 supports both access to high-quality early learning for families and the educators who make that possible and is an investment worth making.**

Early childhood education is central to our work on preventing the experience of intergenerational family homelessness. It's an investment in the whole family and in particular, the youngest members of families. This is also about achieving more equitable outcomes for Black and Indigenous children that disproportionately experience homelessness. As the Minnesota Department of Education has shared, 62% of Pathway I scholarship recipients identify as BIPOC and 68% of Pathway I scholarships are awarded to those in a priority category – families experiencing homelessness, child protection or foster care involved, or a minor parent family.

While People Serving People has been able to increase access to high-quality, parent directed early childhood education for families with the highest need, there are still thousands of families across Minnesota that need access to early childhood development. **Pre-pandemic, an estimated 31,000 children were eligible for scholarships. This bill would help families come off of that waitlist.**

The Child Care Stabilization Grants are also crucial in the financial support for our teachers and programs, allowing them to make a powerful impact. **The Stabilization Grants have buoyed our two programs and enabled us to recruit and retain teachers in a challenging hiring market.** In 100% of our children, within the average time they spend at our shelter (60 days), they show growth in three or more of the assessed developmental categories. Our teachers work tirelessly to support learners and families through destabilizing times and make an impact with these families.

Additional funding for Early Learning Scholarships and continuing Child Care Stabilization Grants are ways to get upstream to prevent families from entering shelters, or returning to our shelter multiple times in their lives.

Thank you,

Rinal Ray
CEO