



April 14, 2023

Dear Chair Marty and Members of the Finance Committee,

Please find in this packet, letters of support from the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition broadly as well as the following Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program recipients:

- La Red Latina de Educacion Temprana
- Indigenous Visioning
- Children's Dental Services
- African Community Services
- Korean Services Center
- Multicultural Autism Action Network (MAAN)
- Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD)
- Centro Tyrone Guzman

We thank you for your support and enclose a photo here of you stopping by our event, Community Solutions for Children Day on the Hill on March 20, 2023. Pictured are the children from the Montessori American Indian Childcare Center, also recipients of the Community Solutions Grant Program.



Sincerely,

May Esperanza Lososo

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition Steering Committee member and staff support



April 14, 2023

Dear Chair Marty and Members of the Committee,

**The Voices and Choices for Children Coalition strongly supports Article 13, Section 18 of the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill SF 2995, Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program.** This historic program focuses on improving measures of well-being for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota prenatal to grade 3 through a community and equity-centered approach across the state. **We encourage your committee to fund this program at \$10 million a biennium, the Governor's original proposal, instead of the current \$8 million.**

Currently, twenty-two innovative community-generated solutions are being put to work tackling persistent unequal child outcomes across the state with funding from Community Solutions. The funding in SF 2995 will help us harness additional assets and knowledge within communities. To the extent additional funding is available, it would only increase the program's ability to deliver on its promise of a healthy future for every Minnesota child.

Our coalition focuses on shaping more equitable practices and policies that will support better outcomes for children of color and American Indian children prenatal to 8 years old across the state. More than ever, we want to ensure every Black, Indigenous and child of color and their families in Minnesota are valued in systems and in society in a way that allows for them to have equitable access to resources that celebrate and affirm their cultural background, race, ability, and experience so that they have opportunity to thrive and live their fullest lives. With this opportunity, we can go beyond imagining the many ideas in the state of Minnesota to approach language immersion, home visiting, and other topics around social determinants of health that potential grantees will be able to put into place.

The grant program is guided by a Community Solutions Advisory (CSA) Council comprised of 12 community members who bring professional expertise and lived experience in racial equity, early childhood development and advocacy. The council has been involved from the beginning of the grant program in the RFP creation, reading and scoring applications, and ongoing support and advocacy for more streamlined implementation and processes. The council's process has influenced other grant programs within the Department of Health to prioritize organizations that have 51% or more of their staff and board be comprised of Black, Indigenous and people of color. It is also poised to submit a set of recommendations to more equitably administer the program to the Commissioner of Health based on learnings from the last three years of the pilot.

We acknowledge that there are many other important provisions for children and families within SF 2995. **The Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program is an important step in making Minnesota the best state to raise a child.**

Thank you,

Dianne Haulcy  
Steering Committee Co-Chairs  
Voices and Choices for Children Coalition

Rinal Ray



Senator John Marty  
Chair, Finance Committee  
1100 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

We are La Red Latina de Educacion Temprana (La Red), the Latino Early Child Care Providers Network in Spanish, and are writing about the inclusion of the Community Solutions Fund grant program, Article 13 Section 18 in SF 2995. We testified in support of SF 402, which sustainably funds the Community Solutions Fund grant program out of the Minnesota Department of Health, which you have already discussed in your committee. We received the Community Solutions Fund grant in 2020.

La Red is a group of Latina leader founded in 2013 that are making healthy changes that benefit children and members of the Latino community living in Richfield, Bloomington and across Minnesota. We develop community-driven solutions to support healthy child development and early learning opportunities for children whose families choose or need child care from a family member, friend, or neighbor. We do this by providing cultural early childhood trainings, capacity and leadership development for Latina childcare providers to deliver the highest quality child care possible and support school readiness.

Our work has also changed the lives of the FFN providers by changing their understanding of their role from “just babysitting” to knowing that the work they do is important to the children’s future and our entire community. We have worked to support other family, friend, and neighbor networks across the state to help build their capacity, and are leaders at the National level supporting FFN networks. The Community Solutions grant program has supported us to provide monthly trainings for family, friend, and neighbor providers, develop our curriculum, provide free summer soccer activities for young children, supporting our families throughout Covid.

This grant’s program is different from other state grants we have received. We feel like the state is acting as a partner with us and learning from us. The advisory committee that oversees the work is really interested in hearing what we have to say, and in supporting what the community needs. Other funding from the state should learn from Community Solutions Fund to better support our communities. However, this grant program is time limited and hasn’t been able to fully fund all of the work that’s needed across our communities. We need ongoing funding to support communities to lead on the work they know will impact the health and wellbeing of their children. Please include the Community Solutions Fund grant program in your Health and Human Services omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Ruth Evangelista – Co-Founder La Red  
Faviola Martinez de Estrada – Co-Founder La Red



## Indigenous Visioning

Indigenous Parent Leadership Initiative  
P.O. Box 148  
Bagley MN 56621  
[www.IndigenousVisioning.com](http://www.IndigenousVisioning.com)



March 30, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Indigenous Visioning and All Nations Rise, we thank you for the opportunity to share our strong support for **Article 13, Section 18 of the Senate Health and Human Services omnibus budget bill, Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program**. This historic program focuses on improving measures of well-being for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota prenatal to grade 3 through a community and equity-centered approach across the state.

It is historical because the grant program is guided by a Community Solutions Advisory (CSA) Council comprised of 12 community members who bring professional expertise and lived experience in racial equity, early childhood development and advocacy. The council has been involved from the beginning of the grant program from RFP creation, reading and scoring applications, and ongoing support and advocacy for more streamlined implementation and processes.

As a grantee, we want you to know about the positive impact that Community Solutions funding has brought to the White Earth Ojibwe Nation tribal community through the creation of the Indigenous Parent Leadership Initiative (IPLI). IPLI is a 21 week journey that integrates child development, leadership, democracy skills and Anishinaabe culture into a parent curriculum to empower the parent voice. Through interactive adult learning practices, twenty-two Parents, Grandparents, Foster Parents and Caregivers in the White Earth tribal community learned the importance of the developing child and how local, state and tribal policies and systems affect children & families through a nationally accredited evidence-based civics curriculum. Parents create individual community projects to practice their civic and cultural teachings and help strengthen their leadership skills. IPLI is the first of its kind in Minnesota and White Earth is the second tribal nation in the United States to implement the Parent Leadership Training Institute curriculum. The initiative inspires parents to become empowered to use their voice as change agents and be role models for their children while bringing about positive change within their own lives, their children's lives and the health of their tribal communities.

*"This 21 weeks of the Indigenous Parent Leadership Initiative has been challenging but there comes growth with that. I feel confidence now after learning how to use my voice and build community. It was a blessing getting to know everyone and learning how to network. Everyone is so resourceful! I am grateful!"*

~Autumn O. 2022 Graduate

*"The Indigenous Parent Leadership Initiative has really changed my life for the better and given me more opportunities to learn and lead as a parent in my tribal community. I look forward to the future and seeing more parents in my tribal community experience this process and become parent leaders."*

~Mykee Brown, 2023 Graduate

**We thank you for your commitment to making Minnesota a better place for children and families.** We need to continue to leverage more community led solutions beyond the pilot group of grantees as an upstream way to support children and families.

Miigwech (Thank you) for supporting children, families, and communities.

Barb Fabre, CEO  
Indigenous Visioning  
All Nations Rise

Beth Ann Dodds  
Project Director/IPLI  
Indigenous Visioning



## Children's Dental Services

636 Broadway Street NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
Tel: 612-746-1530  
Fax: 612-746-1531

March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

Children's Dental Services (CDS) thanks the Governor and Lt. Governor for including the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in their Department of Health budget bill SF2995 and encourages the committee to follow suit by including SF402 in the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus budget bill. This important and historic program focuses on improving measures of well-being for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota from prenatal to grade 3 through a community and equity-centered approach.

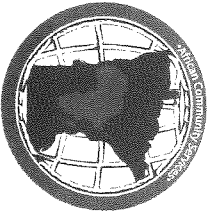
Since 1919, CDS has been dedicated to improving the oral health of children from families with low incomes by providing accessible treatment and education to our diverse community. The Community Solutions grant program has enabled CDS to expand its comprehensive dental treatment and education programs, as well as incorporate wrap-around services, such as providing culturally-tailored care and education surrounding opioid and substance use disorder and its effects on one's oral health. Under this grant program CDS has been able to provide treatment and education for over 3,000 American Indian, Somali, Hmong, Karen and Latinx children and pregnant women and people across Minnesota. Despite this generous and important funding, CDS care providers continue to see immense disparities in access to care for the at-risk communities it serves compared with affluent communities. This, coupled with the ongoing opioid epidemic and changing cultural landscape means that providing necessary, culturally appropriate, community accessible dental care remains a top priority.

More than ever, we want to ensure every Black, Indigenous and person/child of color and their families in Minnesota are valued in systems and in society in a way that allows for them to have equitable access to vital oral health as well as comprehensive health care that celebrates and affirms their cultural background, race, ability, and experience so that they have the opportunity to thrive and live their healthiest lives. It is time to increase the state's investment in community solutions and listen to the voices of community members who for too long have said that solutions for significant challenges facing children and families should come from communities closest to those challenges and that the path to success is to leverage local assets to make meaningful change.

As you weigh various proposals, we hope you will join the Governor and Lt. Governor in giving this innovative program the permanent funding needed to fully deliver on its promise (SF402). Minnesota has the need and Minnesota has the resources. We need to leverage more community led solutions beyond the pilot group of project funding opportunities as a sustainable way to support children and families. Children's Dental Services strongly supports these bills.

Thank you,

Erianna Reyelts  
Associate Director  
Children's Dental Services



## **AFRICANCOMMUNITYSERVICES**

1305 East 24th Street Minneapolis, MN 55404

Phone: 612.721.9984 Fax: 612.721.9031

[WWW.AFRICANCS.ORG](http://WWW.AFRICANCS.ORG)

March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

We are writing in strong support of SF 2995 I am the Executive Director at African Community Services (ACS) and we are recipients of the Community Solutions Grant Program. Our program is the Somali Autism Stigma Reduction Project and is aimed at combating the stigma in the Somali community that is directed towards children with autism spectrum disorder and their families.

ACS' work in this area has started to raise the visibility of this matter with leaders and key organizations in the Somali Community including the Islamic Association of North America, IANA. This interest is new as the attitude toward these children and their families is something that is not generally acknowledged. This could not have been accomplished without a grant from the Community Solutions Fund.

ACS applauds the Governor and Lt. Governor for including the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in their Department of Health budget bill SF 2995 and urges the committee to support this program by including SF402 in the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus budget bill.

ACS supports the Community Solutions Fund because it allows organizations to get the necessary financial support to develop and undertake innovative, community-driven strategies to address difficult community concerns.

Sincerely,

Hassan Omar  
Executive Director  
African Community Services



March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

Korean Service Center(KSC) thanks the Governor and Lt. Governor for **including the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in their Department of Health budget bill SF 2995 and encourages the committee to follow suit by including SF402 in the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus budget bill.** This historic program focuses on improving measures of well-being for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota prenatal to grade 3 through a community and equity-centered approach across the state. KSC focuses on shaping more equitable practices and policies that will support better outcomes for children of color and American Indian children prenatal to 8 years old across the state. More than ever, we want to ensure every Black, Indigenous and child of color and their families in Minnesota are valued in systems and in society in a way that allows for them to have equitable access to resources that celebrate and affirm their cultural background, race, ability, and experience so that they have opportunity to thrive and live their fullest lives.

The grant program is guided by a Community Solutions Advisory (CSA) Council comprised of 12 community members who bring professional expertise and lived experience in racial equity, early childhood development and advocacy. The council has been involved from the beginning of the grant program from RFP creation, reading and scoring applications, and ongoing support and advocacy for more streamlined implementation and processes.

The amazing grantees have also shown the diversity of ideas that center community needs. For example, there are three different grantees working on language immersion and they approach it in ways that speak to and involve children, families, and community. We can only imagine the many other ideas in the state of Minnesota to approach language immersion and other topics around social determinants of health. It is time to increase the state's investment in community solutions and listen to the voices of community members who for too long have said that solutions for significant challenges facing children and families should come from communities closest to those challenges and closest to leverage local assets to make meaningful change.

**As you weigh various proposals, we hope you will join the Governor and Lt. Governor in giving this innovative program the permanent funding needed to fully deliver on its promise (SF402).** Minnesota has the need and Minnesota has the resources. We need to leverage more community led solutions beyond the pilot group of grantees as an upstream way to support children and families.

Thank you,

CSF program Supervisor

Korean Service Center

CSF program manager

Korean Service Center



March 21, 2023

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

**Subject: Letter of Support for Community Solutions Provisions of SF 2995**

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

The Multicultural Autism Action Network is a non-profit organization that serves children with disabilities and their families in our diverse communities in Minnesota. We are grateful to the Governor and Lt. Governor for including the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in their Department of Health budget bill, SF 2995, and we are writing to encourage the committee to include it in the Senate Health and Human Services omnibus bill.

The Community Solutions program uses an equity-centered approach to improve well-being for children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota prenatal to grade 3. Our organization was fortunate to be a grantee under this program, and worked with community members to teach families from diverse communities how to craft videos about their experiences parenting children with disabilities. These videos sought to build community support for families, reduce feelings of isolation, address community specific issues around disability stigma, and normalize the experience of parenting a child with a disability,

In addition to the work empowering families to share their stories, the project had the added benefit of bringing our organization together with other grantees all committed to the work of improving outcomes for our children from diverse communities. We were honored to be part of this incredible cohort of organizations led by members of the communities which they served.

Countless studies have shown that we have the best outcomes for children occur when efforts are led from within, and this we respectfully asked for your continued support of the Community Solutions Grant Program.

Sincerely,

Multicultural Autism Action Network

Fatima Molas. Co-founder  
Delia Samuel. Co-founder  
Rufo Jiru. Board Member  
Maren Christenson Hofer, Executive Director





**Network for the Development of Children of African Descent**  
*Family Education Center*

3255 Spring Street, NE • Suite 100 • Minneapolis, MN 55413 • 651-209-3355 • NdCAD.org

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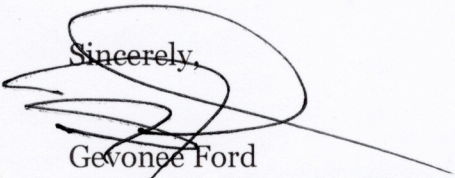
March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) would like to thank the Governor and Lt. Governor for supporting the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program. The grant program has meant so much to so many children and families in the State of Minnesota. NdCAD is a family education and literacy center that works to improve academic success of children as well as stabilize families, helping them become more self-determinizing. The Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program has allowed our organization to expand our reach and impact on families who otherwise would not have access to our programs, services and supports. The grant program focuses on improving measures of well-being for children and recognizes the important role that cultural communities play in their growth and development. The program has assisted organizations, like NdCAD, to elevate and provide community-driven solutions that are responsive to critical needs families face. Building social and cultural capital, among families and communities, is vital to the success of all Minnesota children. We are grateful that the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program exists and are hopeful that your support will mean that its impact can continue for generations to come.

Thank you for supporting the important work made possible through the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program.

Sincerely,



Gevonne Ford  
Founder & Executive Director

*Serving Our Community Since 1997*



**CENTRO**  
TYRONE GUZMAN

March 23, 2023

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Committee,

Centro Tyrone Guzman thanks the Governor and Lt. Governor for including the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in their Department of Health budget bill HF 2930 and encourages the committee to follow suit by including HF639 in the Health and Human Services Omnibus budget bill.

I am the Executive Director at Centro Tyrone Guzman, and we are recipients of the Community Solutions Grant Program for Montessori Home Visiting Program. This program proactively provides early childhood development support to Latine\* parents with young children, age birth to three, who speak Spanish in the home

We support the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program because it addresses inequality as well as amplifies the innovative solutions that leverage community assets. It promotes culturally relevant programs, and centers the experiences and dignity of those most impacted by inequity.

Community Solutions Grant Program represents more than money, it is also recognition that BIPOC, and geographically dispersed communities have invaluable knowledge, and must be active and valued participants within the creation of solutions for their communities.

As you weigh various proposals, we hope you will join the Governor and Lt. Governor in giving this innovative program the permanent funding needed to fully deliver on its promise ( HF639). The collective health and prosperity of our state is tied to ensuring every child has what they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Roxana Linares  
Executive Director

*Centro Tyrone Guzman has chosen to use "e" in place of the Spanish-language masculine "o," to include people of all genders. We are committed to gender inclusion and recognize the important contributions that all persons make to our communities.*