



April 18, 2023

Senator John Marty  
Chair, Finance Committee  
1200 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty and Members of the Committee:

Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition (PN-3) is excited to write in support of SF 2684 to significantly invest in early childhood initiatives to support the healthy growth, development and learning of children. Please join us in supporting SF 2684, specifically measures that ensure more children and their families have access to the care and learning programs they need to be successful in school and in life.

### **Early Learning Scholarships**

Early Learning Scholarships empower parents and caregivers to decide what is best for their family's unique situation by bridging funding gaps for low-income families to access quality early education and care programs and improve school readiness in populations with the highest needs. Scholarships provide flexibility and predictability to families, allowing them to focus on supporting their families' economic viability in the future. We are particularly pleased to see the focus on prioritizing infants and toddlers with this bill and believe these policy changes will positively impact the lives of families with young children.

### **Early Childhood Family Educators**

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a voluntary program for pregnant people and families with children between the ages of birth to kindergarten and works to empower caregivers and support the growth and development of young children in Minnesota. These individualized programs are proven to improve school readiness and increase the parents' involvement in their child's care. ECFE strengthens families and enhances the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children by using evidence-informed practices and individualizing curriculum to address the local needs of the community and families in the state of Minnesota.

### **Grants for Grow Your Own Early Childhood Educator Programs**

Investing in "Grow your Own" programs will allow for greater cultural responsiveness to address racial disparities in early education outcomes as well as address the shortage of early education providers—a statewide issue that disproportionately impacts families of color. Expanding investment in the perinatal, infant, and early childhood care workforce to increase capacity and improve retention in the field.

Thank you,

Deb Fitzpatrick,  
Children's Defense Funds-MN,  
Co-Chair

Nancy Jost,  
West Central Initiative,  
Co-Chair

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn,  
MN Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Coalition,  
Coalition Coordinator