Dear Members of the House Early Childhood Committee:

As you begin your consideration of SF 1276, we appreciate the opportunity to share our strong support.

Early Learning Scholarships are a vital part of Minnesota's early care and education system, making quality child care available to thousands of children each year. Unfortunately, limited resources and eligibility criteria leave too many children without the critical support needed each year. *SF 1276 has the potential to address both.*

Early Learning Scholarships provide additional options for families, fill important gaps and augment other supports. In over 40 listening sessions conducted by CDF-MN over the past few years, we heard loud and clear about both the value and additional need for Early Learning Scholarships and Child Care Assistance as families struggle to secure the stable, nurturing, culturally appropriate care and education their children need and deserve.

CDF-MN is committed to ensuring every Minnesota child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. We pay particularly attention to those children facing the steepest barriers to success. **As the state strives to address our appalling racial disparities, fully funding programs like Early Learning Scholarships and making them accessible to children from families in low-income households beginning at day one needs to be a top priority.**

CDF-MN is pleased to see the Minnesota Senate seriously considering the real need for wise and significant early care and education resources that are necessary to ensure *every child* is given the opportunity to thrive. **We hope you will join us and 72% of Minnesota voters in supporting the significant ongoing investments needed to make quality child care affordable, accessible and relevant to their needs** -- giving children, families and businesses the best chance possible to succeed.

Debra Fitzpatrick
Policy and Research Director