

Date: 3/14/23

RE: Support for SF 2399

Dear Chair Kunesh and Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee:

All children in Minnesota, regardless of race, geography, income level, or age, deserve access to an early care and education system, food support system, child protection system, and other programs that best meet their needs. Programs for our kids and families must be accessible, equitable, and evolving to meet the variety of challenges kids face everyday. However, the way our system is currently set up does not prioritize the success of our families, early educators, service providers, or children.

Creating a cabinet-level Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) in Minnesota is a solution to the fragmented childcare system and other services that families, providers, and educators are currently navigating. A new department would:

- Reimagine how early care and education services are distributed and accessed by all Minnesotans
- Streamline decision-making power to a single, accountable commissioner
- Better ensure that high-quality programs and services get the funding they need
- Improve coordination in the delivery of services to programs and families

Minnesota has a strong tradition of leading the way in delivering services to families, but many other states have already beat us to this common-sense approach to governance. This proposal is supported by childcare providers, parents, educators, advocates, service providers, and experts in the field. Outcomes for kids in several areas—from kindergarten readiness to the child foster care system—are in need of improvement. Without a dedicated cabinet level-agency and commissioner directly overseeing these programs, disparities will continue to increase.

With a state surplus of over 17 billion dollars right now, we can ensure adequate investment is made today to set our children up for the long run. As we invest in more programs for our youngest children and their families, this new agency will ensure proper oversight, execution, and accountability for those programs. This proposal is about giving Minnesota early care and learning programs, food assistance programs, MFIP, youth intervention programs, and other critical services for kids and families the home they need in order to get the attention they deserve.

We urge the legislature to join Gov. Walz's vision of this urgent need to restructure state government to meet this moment and better serve our kids and families.

Sincerely,

Indigenous Visioning/All Nations Rise

Barbara Fabre

Minnesota Child Care Association

Clare Sanford

New Horizon Academy

Clare Sanford

Kids Count On Us - ISIAH

Lars Negstad

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota

Debra Fitzpatrick

Northwest Minnesota Foundation

Katie Gunderson

West Central Initiative

Nancy Jost

Start Early Funders Coalition

Allison Corrado

Elders for Infants

Sandy Heidemann

Montessori Center of Minnesota

Nora Springer

ABC123 Child Enrichment Center

Nicole Flick

Northside Achievement Zone

Arielle Handevidt

Minnesota Head Start Association

Kraig Gratke

Think Small

Cisa Keller

Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children

Heather Charmoli

Building Blocks Learning Center

Shea Ripley

Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn

Greater Twin Cities United Way

Tina Rucci

Mini Mos Child Care and Preschool

Courtney Greiner

MN Alliance of YMCAs

David Dominick

Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood

Megan Jekot

Stanford University - Center for Research on Education Outcomes

Won Fy Lee