



Chair Melissa Wiklund
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
95 University Ave W, St Paul, MN 55103

February 15, 2023

Senator Wiklund and Members of Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Brook LaFloe and I am the co-founder of Niniyaanis One Of Ones, a social enterprise for Indigenous Children. I am a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, and I am also a member of the Community Solutions Advisory Council. I am sharing strong support for SF 402 because I believe community solutions are a strategy that addresses & amplifies the innovative solutions that leverage community assets, cultural relevancy, and centers those most impacted by inequality. Communities have the competencies & solutions that build on their local & cultural strengths but are too often lacking the resources to implement them.

The Community Solutions Grant Program is a strategy by which we can begin to address the disparities in resources to specific communities. It leverages the assets in the communities to address their problems. I believe early childhood is the most practical place to close early disparities & inequalities before they become larger gaps and leave Minnesota with lower educational attainment rates and workforce shortages. Investing in healthier children & families earlier will create not only stronger communities across Minnesota but will create a stronger Minnesota.

As a member of the Community Solutions Advisory Council, I have followed and supported the journey of our original grantees from 2019 whom shared many stories of success & resiliency. Some grantees becoming essential workers during the implementation of their community solution grants & the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Turning into heroes for the working families of young children in Minnesota who were collectively upholding our economy. Early childhood education, health & workforce is an essential part of our society that we can no longer ignore & is due for a greater collective investment.

I strongly encourage you to support SF 402. Sustained funding over time will allow communities the opportunity to refine their solutions, extend their reach, and ultimately set up this generation of children for success.

Brook LaFloe

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