



MAHUBE-OTWA
Community Action Partnership, Inc.

Our Mission... To Empower People to Achieve Self Sufficiency

February 23rd, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
1200 Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee:

MAHUBE-OTWA's Community Action Agency has been privileged over the past year in supporting Minnesota's Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers. Approximately 40% of infants and toddlers and 25% of children ages 3–5-years old were cared for by FFN providers¹ in Minnesota in 2016. Families with children who have special needs, low-income families, immigrant and refugee families, single-parents, parents working non-traditional hours and families in rural communities often access family, friends, and neighbors to help care for their babies and young children because licensed family care or center care is out of reach financially or geographically. Additionally, there are other families that believe family, friends and neighbors can offer important quality care and learning environments that support their cultural or religious values that are not as available in other settings.

During the pandemic, Minnesota dedicated \$3 million in one-time federal CRSSA funding for FFN care that will, and the legislature allocated an additional \$1.5 million in one-time funding to support FFN providers end in October of 2023. These time limited resources have been used to identify and support FFN providers across the state, increase awareness of available educational resources and provide access to training for providers in their primary language. This grant has and continues to provide critical resources to providers who don't always have access to learning and educational materials or know how to access learning on child safety and safe sleep.

We know more Minnesota families have turned to family, friends, and neighbors throughout the last couple of years due to the loss of licensed childcare providers and the ongoing challenges of balancing care for young children and maintaining work. MAHUBE-OTWA believes all children deserve access to high quality care and learning, regardless of the care provider and setting. We have seen first-hand how prioritizing and recognizing these valuable caregivers has provided access to important health, safety, nutrition, and educational resources to the field and has helped to ensure infants and young children across Minnesota are getting the best care possible.

Thank you,

Liz Kuoppala
MAHUBE-OTWA CAP
Executive Director

Dana Patsie
MAHUBE-OTWA CAP
Child Care Programs Director

Meagan Hernandez
MAHUBE-OTWA
Child Care Programs Manager

¹ Use of FFN care as their only or primary childcare arrangement. (Friend, Family and Neighbor (FFN) Care, Wilder Research, 2016.