



Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
1100 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 23, 2023

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition, we would like to share our appreciation the inclusion of the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program in SF 2995 before your committee. Our vision as a Coalition is that every child in Minnesota is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success. Our coalition is committed to supporting policies that will benefit low-income, rural and Black, Indigenous and children of color and their families; and the programs that serve them.

Your committee has already heard SF 402 separately, which would sustainably fund the Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development Grant Program out of the Minnesota Department of Health. We are thankful to the Governor and Lt. Governor for including the Community Solutions Fund program in the Department of Health's budget bill as well, and encourage the committee to include SF 402 in the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus budget bill. We have seen firsthand the impact Community Solutions Grants Program has had with funded organizational partners on their ability to deeply engage with families, children and early childhood systems to improve the lives of communities of color and rural communities. The Community Solutions Grant Program has supported numerous Family, Friend and Neighbor efforts, supporting a critical element of our early childhood system that lacks deep investment and support. It is critical to support the reach and sustainability of high impact programs like the Community Solutions Grants Program. Communities closest to the problems are also closest to the solutions and are often the furthest from the resources. The Community Solutions Grants Program is a critical policy tool to solve this problem. As supporters of this initiative and funders of the Community Solutions Fund: A New Tool for Equity report that highlights key learnings from the Community Solutions Fund, we know that investment in these programs is necessary. These programs support children and family's immediate and long-term health by improving the community conditions that drive health and educational outcomes.

We support a robust early childhood system that gives children and families access to a continuum of high-quality child care and early learning programs. We must maintain and continue to grow equitable investments in critical early childhood programs based on ongoing community feedback and guidance.

Sincerely,

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Coalition Coordinator

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