

Senator Melissa Wiklund  
Chair, Health and Human Services  
95 University Ave W  
Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 31, 2023

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition, we would like to share our appreciation and support for 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.

The early childhood omnibus bill shares many of our priorities that all children in Minnesota have a strong and healthy start and are prepared to contribute to our state's vitality. In particular we were pleased to see priorities that will enable more children to access programs and efforts that make child care and early learning more accessible including increasing the CCAP reimbursement rates to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (section 11). The establishment of the Department of Children, Youth and Families is an important systemic fix to provide support and resources that meet family's needs. We also were pleased to see resources for Family, Friend and Neighbor childcare providers through the inclusion of the FFN grant program (section 12) and the inclusion of the Community Solutions Fund grant program (section 18). The inclusion of the elements that will directly benefit the early childhood workforce will have a significant impact broadly on the early childhood system and we were particularly pleased to see the establishment of the wage scale through the Children's Cabinet Working Group (section 22). Our early childhood system requires significant investment after decades of underinvestment to ensure all families have access to affordable programs that will meet their needs, with a fairly compensated and supported early childhood workforce, and these investments move us in the right direction.

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,

Carrie Zelin Johnson  
Start Early Funder  
Coalition Coordinator

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