



March 30, 2023

Chair Wiklund, Vice-Chair Mann, Ranking Member Utke, and members of the Senate Health & Human Services committee;

Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce was formed in 2016 to build upon the recommendations of the National Institute of Medicine's "Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age Eight" report. Our goal is to ensure Minnesota's early childhood educators are qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated, regardless of setting. We are pleased to see numerous proposals in the Governor's budget recommendations that will go a long way toward supporting that goal. Policy makers in Minnesota are sitting in a very powerful point in our state's history, with a nearly \$18 billion surplus and a child care sector desperately in need of transformational change.

We applaud the grand efforts of Senators and staff in putting together SF 2995. There is so much to be excited about in this budget bill. We want to lift up the following provisions as particularly transformational for early childhood workers in Minnesota:

- Early childhood registered apprenticeship program from SF 2606 (Baldon)- \$2M annually for a truly revolutionary apprenticeship program that will provide employment-based training and mentoring opportunities for early childhood workers. **Art.14, Sec. 16.**
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarships - \$695K in 2025 annually - comprehensive scholarships that enable early educators to work towards credentials and degrees by making it possible for them to afford both the time and expense of going to school.
- Empower to Educate - \$1.3M in 2025 annually – targeted to economically disadvantaged individuals, grants for funds to recruit and provide child care training, job skills, and job placement. **Art. 14, Sec. 15.**
- Child Care Wayfinder, the one-stop assistance network for child care, which is fully funded at \$2.9M in 2025 and ongoing. **Art. 14, Sec. 15.**
- Shared Services Alliances - \$500K in 2024 ongoing– to help family child care providers achieve economies of scale and run more efficient programs, boost provider wages, increase enrollment, and leverage shared supports services to improve quality. **Art. 14, Sec. 18.**
- REETAIN grants - \$1M in FY24 and FY25 - "Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now" (REETAIN) grant program was established to provide

competitive grants to incentivize well-trained child care professionals to remain in the workforce. **Art. 14, Sec. 15.**

- Retention payments, which are direct grants to centers and family child care providers to be used for across-the-board compensation. This request is not fully funded at the Governor's recommended amount of \$117,250M in FY24 and \$162,950M in FY25 but at the rate of \$102,887 in FY24 and \$142,989 in FY25. Should the committee contemplate any adjustments in the budget, we would encourage additions here. **Art. 14, Sec. 17.**

We see this as a career with many facets, and one deserving of respect and support, given the tremendous impact it has on our children, families, and communities. The HHS budget you have assembled demonstrates that this committee feels the same. We are grateful your support.

Sincerely,

Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce