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February 28, 2023

Senator Bobby Joe Champion
3401 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Champion and members of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee:

On behalf of Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), I want to express my strong support for SF1611. SWIF serves the 18 counties of rural Southwest Minnesota, including the Upper Sioux Community and Lower Sioux Indian Community. Our region borders Iowa and South Dakota, and many of my communities have 3-digit populations. This bill will provide critically needed resources to help address the child care crisis throughout Greater Minnesota.

This bill will leverage our decades of work in advancing economic development, our relationships and multi-sector collaboration, our community engagement, and our systems to help address the urgent child care crisis that is impacting our kids, our families, our main streets and other businesses, and our state. The bill provides urgently needed capital for the critical functions of community planning, private sector engagement, training and technical assistance, and other supports to advance the creation and retention of child care enterprises.

With this funding, we can continue the critically important work which also advances entrepreneurship and economic mobility through the creation and retention of child care enterprises, creates opportunities for Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers, fosters community engagement, increases collaboration among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors using solid data and analytics, and grounding project development in prudent business planning and sustainability. Another great opportunity with this funding is in continuing efforts to grow and enhance our child care and early education workforce, to ensure that our child care enterprises statewide can attract and retain the talent they need to deliver the quality care and education that all kids need to succeed.

This bill will also help foster projects that catalyze the innovative models that are proving to be transformational in our rural communities, such as collaborations between schools and hospitals, employer-driven innovative models, engagement of the faith community, new opportunities for family-license providers, partnerships with high schools, community colleges, and universities, and new collaborations that we have not yet even dreamed of. Minnesota needs to increase and retain capacity in both family license and center-based programs, and these public investments have done that, and will continue to do that.

I am grateful for your consideration of this bill, and I look forward to the Minnesota Initiative Foundations continuing to be your trusted partner in advancing an economy where businesses and families can prosper, grounded in equity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Marquardt".

Scott Marquardt, CECD, EDFP
President



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