



GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA
553 Fairview Ave. N., St. Paul, MN 55104

March 13, 2023

Dear Chair McEwen and Members of the Senate Labor Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota to express our support of the Department of Labor and Industry's (DLI) request to increase funding for the Labor Education Advancement Program (LEAP) Grants.

Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota has been a recipient of LEAP funds since 2003. Through this funding, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota has provided pre-apprenticeship training and support to women and communities of color in the Twin Cities Metro Area, connecting them with apprenticeship opportunities in partnership with local union training centers. Over the last 20 years, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota has facilitated the participation and retention of women, people of color and Indigenous people into registered apprenticeship programs and employment in careers that pay a family-sustaining wage.

While DLI's LEAP grant has been an important supplemental funding source to reach more participants and add more support services for people entering registered apprenticeships, the current funding covers only a portion of the budget necessary to implement a comprehensive program. With larger grants, we could increase the overall number of women and people of color served each year, broaden existing support services (e.g., childcare and transportation assistance), integrate new supports like union dues payment assistance, and expand the scope of pre-apprenticeship training to additional sectors.

Registered apprenticeship is a time-tested employment-based training model providing workers the opportunity to earn as they learn a valuable career and achieve a nationally recognized credential. However, registered apprenticeships can be intimidating for people who have few connections to apprenticeship. As Minnesota's workforce becomes more diverse, we need to invest in programs that support women, people of color, and Indigenous people succeed in registered apprenticeship programs.

Thank you for your past support of the LEAP program and for your consideration of this proposal to meaningfully increase the impact of these funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila Olson".

Sheila Olson
Chief Services & Programs Officer
Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota