

# A GREAT START FOR EVERY CHILD

## Dear Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee:

We are a diverse group of individuals and organizations that has come together to build an early care and learning system that is affordable for families, high-quality for kids, and a sustainable career for teachers. We are writing today to urge you to pass S.F.3790 to work as quickly as possible to make child care more affordable for hard working Minnesota families.

**Child Care Affordability Crisis.** Minnesota families are facing a serious child care affordability crisis that must be addressed by the Legislature as soon as possible. While the federal government has determined that families can afford to pay up to 7 percent of their annual household income for child care, the Economic Policy Institute estimates that a typical Minnesota family with an infant and preschooler is paying about 37 percent of its household income for child care. That's more than 5 times what is affordable. Families with more young children and/or lower incomes are paying even more.

These child care costs – often larger than the cost of college tuition, a home mortgage, or rental housing – are crushing hard-working young families at a stage of their lives when they haven't yet had an opportunity to build up their earning capacity and savings. As a result, many families are being forced to tap into their savings, go into debt, forgo employment, or not have children.

We look forward to working with the Minnesota Legislature to address this crisis as soon as possible. Our group is aligned in support of child care affordability legislation that meets the following principles:

- **Prioritize Assistance.** We support prioritizing assistance for middle class families that are closest to the existing benefits cut-off “cliff.”
- **Streamline Assistance.** We support assistance being delivered in a way that doesn't unnecessarily burden Minnesota families or child care providers.
- **Fast-Track Assistance.** We support helping families in a way that can be easily and swiftly implemented, starting the fall of 2024.

We enthusiastically support S.F.3790 because it is consistent with all of our principles. Sen. Grant Hauschild and his House counterpart Rep. Kotyza-Witthuhn listened to experts in the field, including the parents and providers most impacted, and did an excellent job capturing their needs in this legislation. Again, we strongly encourage the Legislature to make child care affordability a top priority. Doing so will help more than just families struggling under the weight of enormous child care bills. It also will help Minnesota's youngest learners who need quality child care to get prepared for school and life, struggling child care providers who need more families using their services in order to keep their doors open, and businesses who are desperate to find enough employees during the most serious labor shortage in decades.

Doing that will strengthen Minnesota's families, communities, and economy. In other words, it will help all Minnesotans.

Again, we strongly encourage you to pass S.F.3790, and we look forward to working with you to address this urgent crisis.

Sincerely,

*ABC123 Child Enrichment Center*

*All Nations Rise*

*Before Racism*

*Bethesda All Stars Childcare Center*

*Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC)*

*Children's Defense Fund Minnesota*

*Doctors for Early Childhood*

*First Children's Finance*

*Generation Next*

*Indigenous Visioning*

*Jill Magnell, Child Care Owner*

*Kay Hendrich, Early Care Educator*

*Kids Count on Us*

*Kristy Anderson, Licensed Family*

*Child Care Provider*

*Little Moments Count*

*Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board*

*Minnesota Alliance of YMCAs*

*Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition*

*Missy Okeson and Katie Gunderson at*

*Northwest Minnesota Foundation*

*MN Budget Project*

*MN Child Care Association*

*MN Parents for Affordable Child Care*

*MnAEYC*

*New Horizon Academy*

*Northstar Prosperity*

*Saint Paul Promise*

*Start Early Funders Coalition*

*TakeAction Minnesota*

*The Family Partnership*

*The Sheltering Arms Foundation*

*Think Small*

*West Central Initiative*

*YMCA of the North*