



Dear Lawmakers,

On behalf of Families First of MN, I am writing in support of H.F. 470 and S.F. 1049, a bill to maintain the current level of funding in the Early Learning Scholarship program.

As an organization dedicated to ensuring that children and families have access to high-quality child care and early education, we have seen firsthand the life-changing impact the Early Learning Scholarship has with families. Families First of MN is proud to serve as an Area Administrator of the Early Learning Scholarship for 28 counties across Minnesota. For those lucky enough to receive one, these scholarships contribute to financial stability for families and ensure that children are receiving consistent and high-quality care, setting them on the path for future academic success.

Unfortunately, as our current and ever-growing waitlist can attest, there are many families still waiting for this support. Without access to affordable and reliable child care, caregivers may struggle with inconsistent work schedules, frequent absences, and even job loss. Additionally, the high cost of child care can also consume a significant portion of a family's income, making it difficult to afford other necessities like food, rent, and healthcare. Ultimately, the lack of affordable child care not only impacts individual families, but the community as a whole by reducing workforce participation and productivity.

When families have access to consistent, high-quality early education, the benefits are profound. Not only are children set on a path for future academic success, but opportunities are opened to caregivers to pursue employment, further education, and access other professional opportunities. These scholarships help break cycles of poverty, promote financial stability, and help families thrive.

We recognize that the state faces a challenging budget outlook, but the investment in Early Learning Scholarships is small when compared to the immense benefits they provide. By prioritizing this funding, the state not only supports the children and families who directly benefit but also strengthens our communities, reduces educational disparities, and reinforces our workforce and economy. It is a small, cost-effective strategy that has a great, far-reaching impact.

We urge you to continue championing early childhood education and to support the necessary funding to expand access to scholarships. Our families, communities, and the economy depend on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to Minnesota's children and families, and your support of H.F. 470 and S.F. 1049.

Sincerely,

Sara Stebbins
Director of Early Childhood Supports
Families First of MN