

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Health and Human Services
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 20, 2025

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Start Early Funders Coalition, we are writing in support of SF1049, in support of early learning scholarships. Without investment this year, our Early Learning Scholarships program will be cut in half. This reduction will have a significant impact on young children, and families experiencing significant hardship. Our state made significant investments in 2023, and our children deserve ongoing support to make sure they start off strong and supported. Without ongoing funding, 15,000 babies, toddlers and preschoolers who are eligible for early learning scholarships will be denied the opportunity to access high quality child care and early learning.

Our vision as a Coalition is that every child in Minnesota is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success. Our coalition is committed to supporting policies that will benefit low-income, rural and Black, Indigenous and children of color and their families; and the programs that serve them. Child care and early learning is in crisis across our entire state. High quality programs are closing, and families are finding it increasingly more difficult to be able to afford the high-quality care their children need. Investments to families through these critical programs, like early learning scholarships, are essential to prepare our children for educational and life success.

Flexible, and child-driven Early Learning Scholarships provide greater access to quality care and education for our children and their families with the greatest economic need. We know that these investments can ease the early childhood care and education shortage, support parents to be able to work, particularly in rural communities and is a key strategy for achieving more equitable outcomes for young children. Minnesota's economy relies on access to quality, affordable child care and early learning and parents, businesses and communities cannot thrive without an adequately supported early learning system. We must ensure all children birth to kindergarten from low-income families have access to these programs.

We support a robust early childhood system that gives children and families access to a continuum of high-quality child care and early learning programs. We must maintain and continue to grow equitable investments in critical early childhood programs based on ongoing community feedback and guidance.

Sincerely,

Allison Corrado,
Start Early Funders Coalition
Public Policy Committee

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