



May 17, 2017

TO: Governor Dayton and MN Legislative Leaders

As early learning advocates and practitioners, we are writing in support of early learning scholarships to expand opportunities for Minnesota's youngest learners, and, in particular, those from low-income families.

As providers, parents, and advocates, we are well-aware of the fact that Minnesota has some of the widest achievement gaps in the country. We know, too, that research consistently shows that the earlier we reach children with high-quality early learning programming, the more likely they are to excel in school and beyond. To maximize the impact of state investments, and help close Minnesota's nation-trailing achievement and opportunity gaps, we support early learning scholarships because they fulfill three critical principles:

Early learning scholarships are need-conscious. As we expand access to early learning opportunities, we must first target funding to families who need it most: Minnesota families living in or near poverty.

Early learning scholarships direct money to high-quality programs. State investments should support proven, successful programs that we know use best practices and meet learners' diverse needs.

Early learning scholarships allow families to choose the best program. Parents should have the power to make the best choice for their children, whether that's attending in-home, center-based, or school-based programs, taking into account the families' work schedule, lifestyle, cultural, and linguistic considerations.

The state's early learning scholarship model, which has had bipartisan support for years, is nationally celebrated and built on proven research in both best practices and targeting resources to low-income families and at-risk children, assuring that children from low-income families are first in line for high-quality programming.

Across the state, an estimated 40,000 low-income children are still waiting in line. As you work together to reach an agreement this session, we ask for you to invest in early learning scholarships, which are reasonable, logical, compassionate, and fiscally responsible.

Thank you for working to ensure that new investments in early learning advance equity, prioritize quality, and honor parent choice. We look forward to working with you on behalf of Minnesota children.

Sincerely,

Northside Achievement Zone
 Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
 White Earth Child Care/Early Childhood Program
 Dave Durenberger

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
 John Hottinger
 Growth & Justice
 Children's Minnesota

People Serving People
Think Small
Art Rolnick
Tom Borman
Great Minnesota Schools
Safe Passage for Children of Minnesota
Close Gaps by 5
Hiawatha Academies
Hunger Impact Partners
Isuroon
Duane Benson
Nathan Chomilo
Child Care Aware of Minnesota
Minnesota Comeback
Laurie Davis
Way to Grow
EdAllies
Minnesota Child Care Association
Northeast College Prep
St. Paul Promise Neighborhood
St. David's Center
Ariane Bromberg

YWCA of Minneapolis
Minnesota Business Partnership
Health Partners
Tom Horner
First Children's Finance
Jen Bestgen
Stephine Reuss
Jackie Harrington
Harvest Initiative
New Horizon Academy
Ka Joog
Minnesota Montessori Network
Shan Stewart
Barb Kylo
Partners in Quality Care
Caring for Kids Initiative
Minnesota Achievement Gap Committee
Melissa Musliner
Stacy Boysen

Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas

Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children - Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance