



May 2, 2019

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor
State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Peggy Flanagan
Lt. Governor
State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Roger Chamberlain
Chair
Senate Tax Committee
3225 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Paul Marquart
Chair
House Tax Committee
597 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, Chair Chamberlain, and Chair Marquart,

We urge you to include in the Tax Conference Report an increase to the income eligibility limit for the K-12 Education Credit benchmarked to eligibility for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program as proposed in SF 560/HF 578.

Both DFLers and Republicans believe strongly in the related goals of providing access to high-quality afterschool programs regardless of family income and reducing our state's achievement gap. The division is often over how to achieve those goals. However, increasing the income limit for the K-12 Education Credit, which hasn't changed in more than two decades, is a common sense idea with strong bipartisan support.

Faribault Youth Investment believes that in order to close the achievement gap in Faribault, more youth need the experience of high quality after school programs, summer camps and individual lessons. Many youth are never presented with the opportunity to learn these life skills because their families cannot afford the program fees and are not aware of the Education Credit available. Families who do currently qualify for the Education Credit are reluctant to work with community partners to access this fund because of the stigma associated with being "low income." Over 60% of Faribault families qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch Program and our community works hard to address food insecurity. Increasing the Education Credit limit will allow us to address their academic needs while avoiding further stigma.

We appreciate the inclusion in the Senate omnibus bill of a more limited increase in the income limit to \$39,000, regardless of household size. However, there are several compelling reasons to increase the limit to the Free and Reduced Lunch Program benchmarks proposed in SF 560/HF 578:

- > It brings the limit more closely in line with what the limit should be if it had kept up with inflation over the past 20+ years (approximately \$52,500);
- > It makes the credit more equitable by factoring in household size;
- > It is the benchmark used in state statute for most other forms of educational support and the most frequent standard used by private nonprofit organizations; and
- > It makes it easier for families and the organizations that assist them to determine eligibility.

We hope you will take this critical step to ensure equitable access to afterschool programs for all Minnesota families!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca M. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca M. Ford

FYI Director

cc: Sen. Justin Eichorn (chief Senate author) and Rep. Ben Lien (chief House author)