



# children's defense fund minnesota

Dear Members of the House Early Childhood Committee:

As you begin deliberations on HF 316, Children's Defense Fund Minnesota and the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition appreciate the opportunity to share our strong support.

CDF-MN is committed to ensuring every Minnesota child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. **For a significant share of our families, especially those from BIPOC and rural communities, achieving that vision depends on the care of family, friends and neighbors.** Families turn to these trusted sources of care under a variety of circumstances, sometimes by necessity but also by choice.

**CDF-MN and Voices and Choices for Children are working in a variety of ways to maximize and respect the choices our families** -- especially those in low income, rural and BIPOC communities -- have for their children, regardless of cost. However, we strongly believe that support is needed to ensure the best possible care wherever a child is entrusted. By providing access to important health, safety, nutrition and educational resources for the family members, friends and neighbors that care for a significant portion of our children every day, **HF 316 helps ensure infants and young children across Minnesota are getting the best care possible.**

**We are also committed to ensuring a diverse child care workforce.** Many child care providers start out their careers as a family member, friend or neighbor providing care to a few children other than their own. **HF 316 is one way we can begin to better recognize and encourage this critically important pipeline to the profession.** As we consider ways to address child care shortages, we cannot ignore this opportunity to "grow our own" providers from all kinds of communities across the state.

***We encourage you to join us in support of HF 316 and help ensure all of our youngest children have the opportunity to thrive with the support of a safe, caring and educational environment.***

Dianne Haulcy

Think Small

Co-Chair

Voices and Choices for Children

Rinal Ray

People Serving People

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Debra Fitzpatrick

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