



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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