

May 1, 2023

Conference Committee Members,

On behalf of The Family Partnership, we would like to share our support of the inclusion of the Executive Function curriculum grant in the House version of HF 2292. The Family Partnership's mission is to close achievement and opportunity gaps for Minnesota children and families living in poverty. We use an evidence-based, targeted approach to connect families to culturally responsive services such as mental health counseling, caregiver education, and early childhood care. Our advocacy work aligns with our policy agenda of addressing systemic disparities and supporting families using a multigenerational approach. Of the families we work with, 95% live below 200% of the federal poverty line, and 90% are families of color.

The Executive Functioning Across Generations curriculum launched successful pilots at TFP, Children's Wisconsin, Children's Home Society of Nebraska, Children and Families First of Delaware, and Head Start centers of Family Service of San Antonio, Texas, and is now being implemented in two additional sites in Minnesota (Headway, now Youable Emotional Health, and Stearns County). With this funding, The Family Partnership will work with early education and care providers, organizations providing home visiting services, ECFE, and parenting groups in high-risk communities in rural, urban, and suburban areas to train educators on implementing this curriculum.

The Family Partnership designed Executive Functioning Across Generations to build executive function and self-regulation skills in preschool children ages 3-5. Executive function (EF) skills help young children: learn how to learn, do well in school, make friends and keep friends, build healthy relationships, make healthy choices as they get older, get a job, keep a job, and eventually parent well. EF skills include working memory (keeping a goal or idea in mind in spite of distractions), impulse control, and persistence. These skills develop most readily in children ages 3-5, and these skills buffer children against the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress.

The design of Executive Functioning Across Generations is centered on equity, and the curriculum has been piloted and evaluated from the start with African American, American Indian, and Latino/a children and families with low incomes in five states. Harvard Center on the Developing Child helped ensure a rigorous evaluation design to measure impact, and over the past 5 years, the program has shown a strong impact on the building blocks for EF skills.

Please support The Family Partnership's Executive Function Curriculum Grant in the final conference committee report for HF 2292.

Sincerely,



Dianne Haulcy

President and CEO of The Family Partnership

Include MinneKIDS Act (HF2864/SF2850) in Final HF2292 Conference Committee Report

Dear HF2292/SF2373 Conference Committee:

On behalf of 1.3 million children in Minnesota, we ask that you include the MinneKIDS Act (included in HF2292) in the final HF2292/SF2373 Conference Committee Report.

The MinneKIDS Act establishes a statewide children's savings account (CSA) program for every baby born in Minnesota. The funding provided in HF2292 is relatively small, but could have a profound impact in establishing a foundation through community planning grants for other parts around the state.

CSAs are long-term savings or investment accounts that help children (ages 0-18) and their families - especially those from low-income families - build savings for the future. In 2019, the legislature supported a Saint Paul pilot project which has helped 10,000+ children and their families learn the importance of CSAs in jumpstarting savings at birth. Every child in every community across the state deserves the same as Saint Paul's children.

Some may ask why a \$50 or \$100 investment matters since it won't pay for college or postsecondary training. With the high cost of college, we would not expect a low-income family to save nearly enough to cover the full cost of higher education. However, even small amounts of money can make a difference in whether a child eventually ends up attending and graduating from technical college or a university.

Research indicates that children from low-income households with savings for college of just \$1-\$499 are three times more likely to attend college and four times more likely to graduate than low-income children who do not have savings accounts for higher education. Having savings for college helps build children's expectations and fosters a college-bound identity in which children see themselves as someone who will go to college. And, research shows that children and young adults' expectations have a strong impact on whether they do, in fact, attend college.

Just as the CSA investment will eventually be small, we know these planning grants will start small but will have a profound impact. It will organize other communities in the state to start building power with community leaders, families, schools, and postsecondary institutions to ensure that we can ensure all Minnesotans have the ability to start small.

Thanks,



The Kid Experts™



Cc: Rep. Kotyza-Witthuhn  
Sen. Boldon  
HF2864/SF2850 Co-Authors

# MinneKIDS Act

HF2864 / SF2850  
(Kotzya-Witthuhn) (Boldon)

Minnesota Kids Investment and Development Savings (MinneKIDS) Act

Jump start savings for **70,000** Minnesota babies each year

## TOTAL FUNDING GOAL: \$16.3 million

### MinneKIDS Seed Deposits: \$10.3 million

- \$50 for every baby statewide
- \$100 for every low-income baby statewide

Youthprise will serve as the program administrator (~\$570,000 per year)

### Eligible Uses

- Technical and vocation school
- 4-year college and university
- Higher ed and nonprofit certificate programs, including business and entrepreneurship training

### MinneKIDS Local Partnership Grants: \$6 million

Local communities can apply for grants to convene stakeholders, use for marketing, community engagement, and programming wraparound support, staffing for local coordination, or build the MinneKIDS account with additional deposits.

### Expansion Grants: \$2 million

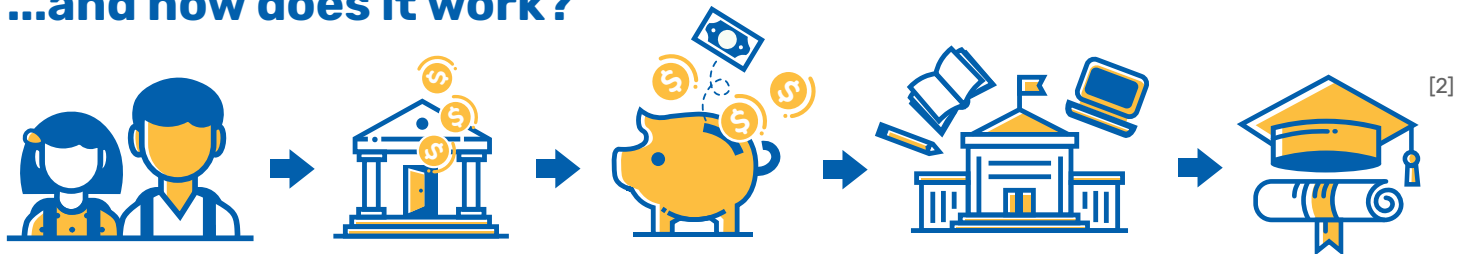
- Existing CSA programs apply to expand their program
- Require 1:1 match from nonstate sources

### Startup Grants: \$4 million

- New communities interested in launching CSA
- No local match required
- Grants to 50% Twin Cities / 50% Greater Minnesota & Tribal Governments

## What is Children's Savings Account (CSA)

### ...and how does it work?



#### FOR ALL MN KIDS

Helps low and moderate income **CHILDREN** begin their collegebound journey

#### OPEN ACCOUNT

Accounts-opened as early as birth are seeded with initial deposits

#### GROW SAVINGS

Accounts grow through family contributions and incentives such as savings matches

#### ATTEND COLLEGE / TRAINING

Savings help pay for postsecondary education. **3X** more likely to **ATTEND COLLEGE**

#### GRADUATE

Children with a college account with \$500 or less are **4X** more likely to **GRADUATE**

[2]

# Impact from Cradle-to-Career

Research shows that even small amounts of college savings can have a big impact on the lives of students from low-income households.

**1** Build collegebound identity<sup>[3]</sup>

**2** Higher expectations for college and career<sup>[4]</sup>

**3** Robust research on outcomes including education, health, parenting, and more<sup>[5]</sup>

## Key CSA Program Design Elements

### Equity

- Universal Eligibility
- Automatic Enrollment, with Opt-out Option

### Support College-Going Identity & Building Savings for the Future

- Automatic Initial Deposit
- Ongoing Investment Over Time
- At-Birth Start

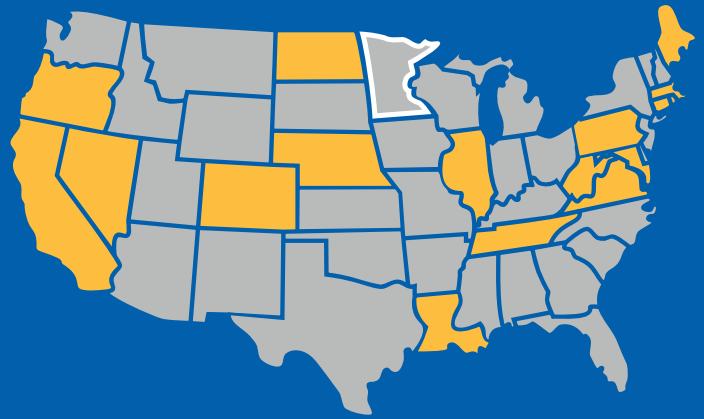
### Administrative Ease for Longterm Sustainability

- Centralized Savings Plan
- Targeted Investment Options
- Potential for Investment Growth
- Restricted Withdrawals
- Integration of Account Vehicles for Savings

### Local Partnerships and Engagement

- Local Coordination of Savings Campaigns
- Community Engagement and Marketing
- Financial Health and College-Going Activities
- Bonus and Incentive Deposits

# Minnesota can be next



## Pathways to a Minnesota Children's Savings Account Program

Providing families with CSAs statewide will help to increase educational, racial and socio-economic equity in Minnesota, helping to increase shared prosperity throughout all communities across the state.



### Statewide Interest and Supporters

#### Communities expressing interest in CSAs

Duluth	Saint Cloud
Grand Rapids	Saint Paul
Northfield	Saint Louis Park
Minneapolis	Windom
Rochester	

#### Organization Supporters

City of Saint Paul	Minnesota Asset Building Coalition
Hennepin County	(140 organizations statewide)
Prepare + Prosper	Saint Paul Children's Collaborative
Minnesota Foundation	Youthprise

Contact info: Shep Harris, Sr. Government Relations Specialist Fredrikson & Byron P.A., 612-219-8531 or [sharris@fredlaw.com](mailto:sharris@fredlaw.com)

#### Research Citations:

[2] Elliott, W., Song, H., & Nam, I. (2013). Small-dollar Children's Savings Accounts and children's college outcomes by income level. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(3): 560-571.

[3] Beverly, S.G., Elliott, W., and Sherraden, M. (2013). *Child Development Accounts and College Success: Accounts, Assets, Expectations, and Achievements*. Center for Social Development Perspective 13-27 (St. Louis, MO: Washington University, Center for Social Development).

[4] See for example: Mello, Z. Racial/ethnic group and socioeconomic status variation in educational and occupational expectations from adolescence to adulthood, *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 4 (2009): 494-504.

[5] Beverly, S., Clancy, M. & Sherraden, M. *Universal Accounts at Birth: Results from SEED for Oklahoma Kids* (St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016).



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March 13,2023

To: Representative Mary Frances Clardy  
From: GG Weisenfeld, Ed.D.  
Senior ECE Policy Specialist, NIEER  
Re: Testimony on HF1806: Kindergarten Entry Assessment

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As a researcher who has studied child assessment policies and implementation, I am writing to support HF1806 and an appropriation to support the kindergarten entry assessment.

The mission of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) is to improve the learning and development of young children by producing and communicating knowledge that transforms policy and practice. At NIEER, we collaborate with a network of local, state, national, and international leaders to design, conduct, and disseminate rigorous research, evaluation, and policy analysis. NIEER also helps prepare the next generation of inspirational leaders and researchers in early education.

Some of the research I am involved in includes studying the purpose of Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEA), including use of data at the classroom, school, and state level (see attached selected publications). Some of the common purposes of KEAs is to provide a snapshot of children's readiness (possibly by subgroups) and understand the relationship between participation in specific early education and care programs. This data may be useful to identify the content of professional development for both pre-K and kindergarten teachers in better supporting children's needs.

Most states have a definition of school readiness, but typically they are not formalized or defined in a way that makes it easy to operationalize. However, states can look at their "de facto" definition of kindergarten readiness in their early learning standards. This is the approach used in HF1806. All 50 states have learning standards that cover the pre-kindergarten years and are articulated to some degree with standards for kindergarten. I strongly support identifying the prekindergarten early learning standards as the measure of success, it is developmentally appropriate and the one used in HF1806.

Finally, lessons can be learned from other states' implementation of their KEAs. The state must develop a strategy for assuring buy-in from all key stakeholders, including allowing for input from various groups prior to implementation. The timeline suggests an understanding of the importance of this process. These groups include but are not limited to kindergarten teachers, principals, families, and other early childhood leaders. Having input from these groups are implied in HF1806, but their importance cannot be emphasized enough to allow for successful implementation of the KEA.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HF1806. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: [gweisenfeld@nieer.org](mailto:gweisenfeld@nieer.org).

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND WORKING PAPERS ON KINDERGARTEN ENTRY ASSESSMENTS

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- Weisenfeld, G., Garver, K., Hodges, K. (2020). Federal and state efforts in the implementation of kindergarten entry assessments (2011-2018). *Early Education and Development*, 31(5): 632-652.
- Weisenfeld, G., Hodges, K., & Garver, K. (2020). [Kindergarten entry assessments \(KEAs\) within a k-12 assessment system](#). National Institute for Early Education Research.
- Weisenfeld, G. (2017). [Assessment tools used in kindergarten entry assessments](#). (CEELO FastFact). Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- Weisenfeld, G. (2017). [Implementing a kindergarten entry assessment \(KEA\) system](#). (CEELO FastFact). Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- Weisenfeld, G. (2017). [Information and resources on developing state policy on kindergarten entry assessment \(KEA\): update](#). (CEELO FastFact). Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- Weisenfeld, GG. (2016). [Using Teaching Strategies GOLD® within a kindergarten entry assessment system](#). (CEELO FastFact). Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.



# Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs) within a K-2 Assessment System

*GG Weisenfeld, Katherine Hodges, & Karin Garver*

In most states kindergarten entry assessments (KEA) are employed primarily to inform parents and teachers. KEAs can serve as a key indicator of child development at formal school entry to inform education, but also could serve as a baseline for assessing progress in the early grades. However, their usefulness for this purpose is limited because KEAs tend to be separate assessments that are neither integrated nor aligned with other state-required K-2 assessments.

Recently, NIEER was asked by a state's Deputy Commissioner if there are any states using a consistent tool across the early learning grades. This state has a comprehensive KEA that is required to be implemented within the first six weeks of the kindergarten year. The Governor's office is seeking to have a more comprehensive approach to assessment across the early childhood band that goes beyond "academic" areas such as reading and math but also includes social emotional, physical, and soft skills.

## Kindergarten Entry Assessment Policy Brief June 2020

### What We Know

- A KEA can be the foundation for a comprehensive and aligned assessment system in the early elementary grades. However, this rarely occurs.
- 35 states (including Washington, D.C.) require assessments of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.
- In 20 states KEAs cover all five "essential" domains of child development)
- In just seven states, KEAs were aligned with assessments to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, typically focusing on literacy.
- One-third of states had a KEA and separate literacy assessment system (kindergarten/1<sup>st</sup> grade to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

### Student Assessments: Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

- Federal requirements do not require assessment of all students until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, aligned assessments in the early elementary grades can help guide and inform coherent learning and teaching in the early grades that supports more optimal student growth in all domains.
- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states administer annual statewide assessments (reading/language arts and mathematics) to all students in grades 3-8 and once in high school. In addition, for English language learners, annual English language proficiency assessments in grades K-12.
- In *The Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating P-3 Approaches* (2019), the authors recommend using common and consistent assessments across age/grade levels as an example of a P-3 strategy. "Ultimately, comprehensive P-3 approaches hold the potential to improve child outcomes and to prevent or close achievement gaps." (p. 3)
- In PACE's 2020 report on PreK-3 alignment in California, it is recommended that school districts align curricula as well as child assessments across pre-K and the early elementary grades in order to "provide teachers with information on where their students fall along a developmental curriculum." (p. 2)
- Alignment includes the integration of curriculum, instruction, and student assessment at the grade level (horizontal) as well as creating an aligned and coherent system throughout the grades (vertical). CCSSO has developed a framework to support states in assessing student assessments (K-12) that ideally will lead to a comprehensive statewide assessment system.

#### Sources:

- For more information about ESSA (2015) and a summary of final regulations of students assessments, see: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaassessmentfactsheet1207.pdf>
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). (2015). *Comprehensive Statewide Assessment Systems: A Framework for the Role of the State Education Agency in Improving Quality and Reducing Burden*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers <https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/Comprehensive%20Statewide%20Assessment%20Systems%20-%20A%20Framework%20Final%206-24.pdf>
- Kauerz, K. & Coffman, J. (2019). *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating P-3 Approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Denver, Colorado: National P-3 Center, School of Education and Human Development, University of Colorado Denver. <https://nationalp-3center.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/P-3-Framework.pdf>
- Koppich, J. E., & Stipek, D. (2020). *PreK-3 Alignment: Challenges and Opportunities in California. Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)*. <https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/May%202016%20Valentino%20Stipek.pdf>
- Sigman, D., & Mancuso, M. (2017). *Designing a Comprehensive Assessment System*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/resource-designing-a-comprehensive-assessment-system.pdf>

## Who Requires KEAs & For What Purposes?

During the 2018-2019, 35 states (D.C. is included as a “state”) required public schools to assess children’s learning and development within a few months of kindergarten entry.<sup>1</sup> These KEA requirements varied in how much choice local education agencies have regarding the specific assessment tool, the domains of development to be assessed, and whether all children must be assessed.<sup>2</sup>

### Requirement of a Specific Tool(s)

States varied in how many tools were required and/or if the tool used was able to be determined locally.<sup>3</sup>

- 25 states required one specific assessment
- D.C. and Kansas specified 2 assessments
- Louisiana had two assessments to select from
- Arkansas and Colorado provided a choice of 3 assessments
- Minnesota provided a choice of 4 assessments
- In Iowa, New York, Texas, and Virginia LEAs have free choice (IA requires state approval)

### What is a KEA?

In 2011, Congress authorized the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) program. RTT-ELC awarded \$1 billion to 20 states via four-year grants in three phases. One of the absolute priorities of RTT-ELC was to use a KEA to promote school readiness. This requirement has provided a common, and widely-used, definition of a KEA and its characteristics.

- The assessment instrument is valid and reliable.
- It is administered within the first few months of kindergarten.
- It covers the five *Essential Domains of School Readiness* (physical well-being and motor development, social/emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge) and is aligned to the state’s ELDS.
- The goals include using data to inform parents and support instruction in the early grades.

For more information about RTT-ELC see:

- U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Program*. <https://www.ed.gov/early-learning/elc-draft-summary>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.). *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/race-to-the-top>

### Federal Enhancement Assessment Grants

In 2013, three state consortia (led by Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas) were awarded federal Enhanced Assessment Grants (EAGs) to support the development or enhancement of high-quality kindergarten entry assessments that would collect valid and reliable information on each entering kindergarten child’s learning and development across the five essential domains of school readiness.

For more information about the three EAGs, see:

- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Competitive grants for state assessments. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/eag/awards.html>
- Weisenfeld, G. (2017). *Assessment Tools Used in Kindergarten Entry Assessments* (CEELO FastFact). New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes. <http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ceelo-fast-fact-kea-state-scan-2017-01-for-web.pdf>

### Tools Used in KEAs

States have chosen a wide range of different tools for KEAs and relatively few states used the same assessment.<sup>4</sup> Commercially developed tools were used in their original forms or adapted by the state. State-developed tools also were used. Two state-developed tools have been validated: the Desired Results Developmental Profile-K (DRDP-K) and the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment which was developed through the federally funded Enhancement Assessment Grant.

The most commonly used assessments were Teaching Strategies Gold®, DRDP-K, and the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

### Eleven commercially developed tools used in 2018-2019:

- Ages and Stages (ASQ-3) (Kansas)
- Ages and Stages SE (ASQ-SE) (Kansas)
- Brigance K Screener (Kentucky, Nevada)
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (D.C.)
- HighScope COR for K (Colorado, Minnesota)
- Istation (Arkansas, Idaho)
- NWEA-Map for Growth (Arkansas)
- Renaissance STAR (Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi)
- Teaching Strategies Gold®, (Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington)
- Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) (D.C.)
- Work Sampling System (Minnesota)



## Eleven state developed tools used in 2018-2019:

- Alaska Developmental Profile
- Connecticut Kindergarten Entrance Inventory
- Desired Results Developmental Profile-K (DRDP-K) (California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, Tennessee)
- Georgia Kindergarten Entry of Developing Skills
- Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP) (Utah)
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina)
- New Mexico Kindergarten Observation Tool
- North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- State Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Oregon)
- Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory
- WA KIDS (Washington)

### Content of the KEA

Child assessments are considered to be “comprehensive” if they cover the five *Essential Domains of School Readiness*, see text box.

#### Essential Domains of School Readiness

In 1991, the National Education Goals Panel identified five domains of child development that were considered to be “essential” in supporting school readiness. The five domains (physical well-being and motor development, social/emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge) have been integrated into states’ early learning and development standards and quality rating and improvement systems. The five *Essential Domains of School Readiness* have been integral parts of federal funding opportunities, including RTT-ELC which defines an assessment as comprehensive if it contains all five domains.

For more information, see:

- National Education Goals Panel. (1991). *The Goal 1 Technical Planning Subgroup Report on School Readiness*.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013). *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Application for Initial Funding* (CFDA No. 84.412). Washington, DC: Author.

Upon review of state statutes and/or the required assessment tool(s), we were able to determine that in the fall of 2018:<sup>5</sup>

- 20 states implemented a comprehensive KEA (covering all five domains of child development)
- 34 states assessed children’s language development (including literacy)

### Children Assessed

Even though 35 states require a KEA, not all required that every incoming kindergarten children be assessed.<sup>6</sup> Some of the possibilities were:

- Schools can opt out (Arizona, California, Minnesota, New Jersey )
- Charter schools are not required to use a KEA (D.C.)
- The KEA is administered to a sample of students (Maryland)
- The KEA is administered regionally (Michigan)
- KEAs requirements are tied to receipt of specific funding (Tennessee)
- Only some schools are required to have a KEA (Pennsylvania)

### KEA is included in K-2 assessment system

#### Kindergarten-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Assessments.

Most states employ some form of assessments in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (primarily in reading) even though this is not required by federal law.<sup>7</sup> A little more than two-thirds of states (35 out of 51) require statewide student assessments in kindergarten and first and/or second grades. We looked more closely at these 35 states to see how these assessments were aligned.<sup>8</sup>

#### KEAs aligned with K-2 Assessments.

In seven states, the identified KEA tool(s) were aligned with assessments for students up to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, see Table 1. In six of these states, the assessments were literacy-based, such as Istation (ISIP) or Renaissance Star (STAR).

In Iowa, the Early Literacy Implementation law requires all kindergarten through third grade students to be assessed at the beginning of the school year, and intermittently throughout the year, using an approved, universal screening assessment.<sup>9</sup> Most districts reported using the

Formative Assessment Systems for Teachers (FAST), which is supported by the state.<sup>10</sup>

Not all states have one assessment, such as Texas, which had 14 approved kindergarten assessments and 12 approved 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade assessments, with seven assessments common between the two lists.<sup>11</sup>

Only North Carolina was found to have a K-3 assessment that was inclusive of its KEA *and* was comprehensive, covering all five domains of child development (see Text Box). In addition to the K-3 Formative assessment, see Text Box, North Carolina had a separate K-3 aligned reading assessment system.

#### North Carolina's K-3 Formative Assessment

The K-3 Formative Assessment process includes the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment. With federal funding from Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and an Enhancement Assessment Grant and state legislative support, North Carolina was able to create, pilot, and implement a comprehensive assessment system. The KEA, aligned with the NC Foundations for early Learning and Development, is gathered within the first 60 days of school.

For information about the Enhanced K-3 Formative Assessment, see: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/early-learning-read-achieve/implementing-enhanced-assessment-other-states>

### KEA is not included and there is a separate K-2 assessment system

One-third of states, (17 out of 51), had clearly defined KEAs, and a separate requirement with associated tools to assess K-2 (or grades 1-2) literacy. In Georgia and Connecticut, the separate literacy system started in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, not kindergarten.

One of the explanations for this creation of a literacy assessment system may be contributed to the federal grant program, Striving Readers. Through Striving Readers, discretionary grants were awarded to 46 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico in 2010, typically for \$150,000 to create a comprehensive literacy program to support literacy development for children from birth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>12</sup> In 2011, six states (Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Texas) were awarded grants ranging from about \$5 million to over \$58 million.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, in

2017, 11 states 2017 were awarded grants to further develop their plans (Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, and Oklahoma) with funding ranging from \$20 million to over \$61 million.<sup>14</sup>

All states, except for Delaware and Hawaii, participated in the Striving Readers program to some degree.<sup>15</sup> In addition, out of the 17 states (including D.C.) that had a KEA and a separate K-3 or 1-3 literacy assessment system, almost half (8 out of 17, 47%), received *substantial* Striving Readers grant funding.

### KEA is required, but there is not a statewide assessment for 1<sup>st</sup> and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> graders.

In 11 states, a KEA was required, but child assessments were either not specified or required for 1<sup>st</sup> and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

- Required child assessments started in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (following the KEA) in Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont.
- In California and Washington, after the KEA, required child assessments began in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- In Arizona, assessments used in the early elementary grades, beyond a KEA, were determined locally.

### Conclusions and Looking to the Future

Our study reviewed the 2018-2019 school year. However, some states have reduced and/or ended the use of their KEAs since then, often due to the ending of federal funding.<sup>16</sup> Prior to the ending of these funds, states were struggling with the reliability of their KEA data due to the limited capacity (both time and knowledge) of teachers to serve as data collectors/observers and assessors.<sup>17</sup> In order to gather accurate student development and skills, more attention must be paid to supporting teachers in understanding how to efficiently and correctly implement the KEA.

States also need to examine the content of their KEAs and what is being assessed. Perhaps with the pressure to improve outcomes on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading assessments, there has been a surge in the implementation of "3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading laws." In 2019, at least 26 states implemented laws that required not only an assessment, but also the implications of what happens to students who do

not achieve particular levels of proficiency.<sup>18</sup> These laws vary in terms of focusing solely on retention (5 states); delegating decision making to the local level (9 states); and being comprehensive and including elements of prevention, intervention, and retention elements.<sup>19</sup> It is understandable, that there has been a push to assess students' literacy attainment, beginning in kindergarten. However, knowing students' skills and development, including how they approach learning (e.g. Are they problem solvers? Creative?), beyond literacy are critical for supporting all students in being successful.<sup>20</sup> Research also suggests that early math knowledge is connected to later reading achievement.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to move beyond limiting kindergarten (and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) assessments to just collecting data on language and literacy.

## Conclusion

States are continually examining their child assessment policies, and in particular for students in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It is critical for policy makers to remember that assessments should not solely focus on literacy in these early elementary grades, but also be more comprehensive and look at all areas of child development, including social and emotion domains, as well as other academic areas, such as mathematics. Unfortunately, only North Carolina had an aligned K-3 comprehensive assessment system.

In this brief, we only examined the assessment tools used in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and their content. Next steps will be to examine how data collected from these assessments are used as well as how pre-K child assessments align with state KEAs.

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## End Notes

1. Weisenfeld, G. G., Garver, K., & Hodges, K. (2020): Federal and state efforts in the implementation of kindergarten entry assessments (2011-2018). *Early Education and Development*. DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2020.1720481
2. To see links to each state's website(s), see: Weisenfeld, et al. (2020).
3. Weisenfeld, et al. (2020).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Croft, M. (2016). *State adoption and implementation of K-2 assessments*. ACT Research & Policy.

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9. For information about Iowa's early literacy law, see: <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/instruction/literacy/early-literacy-initiative>
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11. For information about Texas's approved assessments, see: <https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/student-assessment-overview/state-approved-group-administered-achievement-tests>
12. U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.a.) *Race to the top – Early learning challenge: RTT-ELC Phase*. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards-phase-1.html>
13. U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.b.). *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program*. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders-literacy/awards.html>
14. *Ibid.*
15. U.S. DOE (n.d.a; n.d.b)
16. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2019).
17. Ackerman, D. J. (2018). *Real world compromises: Policy and practice impacts of kindergarten entry assessment-related validity and reliability challenges* (ETS Research Report Series No. RR-18-13). ETS Policy Information Center. doi:10.1002/ets2.12201
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19. *Ibid.*
20. Skills identified as "approaches to learning," such ability to problem solve, creativity, behavioral regulation, etc. have been found to be critical to children's academic outcomes. See: Blair, C. (2002). School readiness. Integrating cognition and emotion in a neurobiological conceptualization of children's functioning at school entry. *American Psychologist*, 57(2): 111– 127; Diamond, A., Lee, K. (2011). Interventions shown to aid executive function development in children 4–12 years old. *Science*, 333: 959–964; Camara, W., O'Connor, R., Mattern, K., & Hanson, M. A. (2015). *Beyond academics: A holistic framework for enhancing education and workplace success*. ACT.
21. Duncan, G.J., Dowsett, C.J., Claessens, A., et al. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43: 1428-1446. Brenneman, K., Stevenson-Boyd, J., & Frede, E. (2009). *Mathematics and science in preschool: Policy and practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER. <http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/20.pdf>

Table 1. Alignment of K-2 Required Assessments with KEAs in 2018-2019 (n = 35)

State	KEA is included in K-2 Aligned System	KEA & Separate K-2 Aligned System	KEA & Separate Grades 1-2 Aligned System	KEA & No Required 1 <sup>st</sup> and/or 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Assessments*
Alaska		X		
Arizona				X
Arkansas	X			
California				X
Colorado		X		
Connecticut			X	
Delaware		X		
D.C.		X (DCPS only)		
Florida				X
Georgia			X	
Idaho	X			
Illinois				X
Iowa	X			
Kansas		X		
Kentucky		X		
Louisiana		X		
Maryland				X
Michigan		X		
Minnesota		X		
Mississippi	X			
Nevada		X		
New Jersey				X
New Mexico		X		
New York				X
North Carolina	X			
Ohio		X		
Oregon		X		
Pennsylvania				X
South Carolina		X		
Tennessee				X
Texas	X			
Utah		X		
Vermont				X
Virginia	X			
Washington				X
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>

\*Includes when decision to select an assessment tool is locally determine



**Minnesota Coalition**  
FOR FAMILY HOME VISITING

April 30, 2023

Representative Pinto & Senator Kunesh  
Chair, Children & Families Committee  
200 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pinto, Chair Kunesh, and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting (MCFHV) is pleased to see smart investments in families with young children through early childhood and family education programs that support the healthy parent-child attachment that all development and growth is stipulated on. MCFHV is especially pleased to support the following provisions:

**Early Childcare Family Education**

ECFE is informed by evidence-based research that shows early childhood programs are most effective in supporting families when they involve both caregivers and their young children. In addition to the classroom style education opportunities, some ECFE programs offer family home visiting where families can learn where they are most comfortable. These individualized programs are proven to improve school readiness and increase the parents' involvement in their child's care. Sufficiently staffing this universally offered education program will allow for statewide coordination to better meet the needs of each community and support a learning environment for young children to have healthy mental, emotional and physical development.

**ParentChild+**

ParentChild+ is an early intervention home visiting program, proven to increase school readiness and produce a significant return on investment. Children who receive these services are 50% less likely to need special education services by third grade and graduate high school at higher rates than their peers. ParentChild+ home visiting promotes equity by providing age-appropriate educational books and toys for children and supports non-English speaking home visitors to work with families in culturally and linguistically responsive ways.

Thank you,

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn,  
Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting  
Project Coordinator

Cati Gómez  
Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting  
Policy Associate



April 30, 2023

Representative Pinto & Senator Kunesh  
Chair, Children & Families Committee  
200 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pinto, Chair Kunesh, and Members of the Committee:

Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition (PN-3) is pleased to see a significant investment in early childhood initiatives to support the healthy growth, development and learning of children. These investments will help position families for long-term stability and success. We are particularly pleased to support the following measures that help ensure more children and their families have access to quality care and learning programs and providers who are well positioned to work with families and offer a great start in school and in life.

#### **Early Learning Scholarships**

Early Learning Scholarships empower parents and caregivers to decide what is best for their family's unique situation by bridging funding gaps for low-income families to access quality early education and care programs and improve school readiness in populations with the highest needs. Scholarships provide flexibility and predictability to families, allowing them to focus on supporting their families' economic viability in the future. We are particularly pleased to see the focus on prioritizing infants and toddlers with this bill and believe these policy changes will positively impact the lives of families with young children.

#### **Early Childhood Family Educators**

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a voluntary program for pregnant people and families with children between the ages of birth to kindergarten and works to empower caregivers and support the growth and development of young children in Minnesota. These individualized programs are proven to improve school readiness and increase a parent's involvement in their child's care. ECFE strengthens families and enhances the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children by using evidence-informed practices and individualizing curriculum to address the local needs of the community and families in the state of Minnesota.

#### **Grants for Grow Your Own Early Childhood Educator Programs**

Investing in "Grow your Own" programs will allow for greater cultural responsiveness to address racial disparities in early education outcomes as well as address the shortage of early education providers—a statewide issue that disproportionately impacts families of color. Expanding investment in the perinatal, infant, and early childhood care workforce to increase capacity and improve retention in the field.

Thank you,

Deb Fitzpatrick,  
Children's Defense Funds-MN,  
Co-Chair

Nancy Jost,  
West Central Initiative,  
Co-Chair

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn,  
MN Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Coalition,  
Coalition Coordinator



May 1, 2023

Dear Early Education Conferees;

Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce was formed in 2016 to build upon the recommendations of the National Institute of Medicine's "Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age Eight" report. Our goal is to ensure Minnesota's early childhood educators are qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated, regardless of setting.

Policy makers in Minnesota are sitting in an immensely powerful point in our state's history, with a nearly \$18 billion surplus and a child care sector desperately in need of transformational change. We are pleased to see so many incredible proposals that have been included in the bills you have before you in this conference committee.

To that end, we strongly encourage acceptance of the following two provisions in the **HF 2292, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engrossment**:

**Sec. 5 & Sec. 17, Subd. 2. (R5 & R18)** \$3M in FY24 and FY25 to expand to include early educators in the the proven Grow Your Own program, which facilitates partnerships between educator preparation programs, school districts or charter schools, and community organizations that recruit and prepare local community members (e.g., parents, paraeducators, non-certified school staff, high school students) to enter the teaching profession and teach in their communities.

**Sec. 18. (R24)** \$250K in FY24 and FY25 to fund grants to higher education institutions who wish to improve the curricula of early childhood programs by embedding the proven Knowledge and Competency Frameworks.

"Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Frameworks for Early Childhood Professionals are based on specific areas of focus. Versions are available for those working with infants and toddlers, family child care providers, and preschool-age children in center and school programs. All versions include the skills needed to work with young children, with more specific skills added for the area of specialization.

The framework combines what an early childhood educator needs to know about research and theory, alongside the skills and abilities needed to work effectively in the field. The framework aligns vertically to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) Standards and horizontally to show a progression of skill development."

The early care and learning sector has been “just barely getting by” for far too long. The time is now to show those Minnesotans that we, as a state, value their time and talents, that we care for them as they care for our littles, that they deserve to be acknowledged for holding up the state’s economy and helping to shape young minds in the most formative years. With gratitude, we thank you for your investments and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann McCully & Nancy Jost  
Co-Chairs, Transforming Minnesota’s Early Childhood Workforce





**Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN) is a statewide, 501c3 non-profit, provider volunteer association with the mission: *to support, promote, and strengthen the profession of licensed family childcare thereby enriching the lives of providers, children, families, and communities.***

April 3, 2023

RE: SF2995 Article 8, 13 & 14

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 26 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I am writing on behalf of MCCPIN regarding Licensed Family Child Care provisions included and one aspect not included in Article 8, 13 & 14. Thank you to Rep. Wiklund for meeting with me to discuss the two issues from a previous hearing (Comparable Competencies Task Force & License = 1 Star Rating).

**Please note that items in BOLD are of question and/or concern.**

#### **ARTICLE 8 – Licensing**

- Change of Annual training definition needs Effective Date. Lines 332.1, 344.11 etc
  - Recognize this is to prepare for annual license of January 1.
  - Providers need phase in time period defined.
- Use of Hub for background studies, correction order appeals, etc. Lines 333.35, 337.33-338.20 onward
  - Looking forward to electronic hub
  - **An alternative method MUST be offered.**
    - **Many licensed providers are not as computer literate as needed.**
    - **Many areas of the state do not have reliable internet.**
    - **Recognize that on line 466.16 there is to be funding to improve internet access**
    - **However, something as critically important as actions against a license should not be left to strictly an electronic method.**
- SUIDS & Abusive Head Trauma 345.33
  - Recognize this is to prepare for annual license of January 1.
  - Needs Effective Date
  - **DHS needs to be required to update this required training and all other DHS developed training after each session.**
    - **Providers are required to take these trainings.**
    - **Trainings are not updated at end of session, so providers are receiving incorrect information and therefor open for negative consequences**
    - **Trainings are currently being updated and completed by end of June 2023,**
    - **Therefore, these new trainings will not be aligned with current session.**



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- **Missing is bill information heard to give updates to 245A.1435 REDUCTION OF RISK OF SUDDEN UNEXPECTED INFANT DEATH 127.3 IN LICENSED PROGRAMS.**
  - Was in SF2818 (?) and transferred to the Human Services Committee
  - Doesn't appear to be in any Omnibus bills.
  - Critical that the work of DHS with stakeholder over 3 years ago be finally included.
  - Providers and licensors need this clarification!

#### **ARTICLE 13 – Childrens and Family**

- Children's Cabinet to include Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
  - Improve communication & coordination of services and direction.

#### **ARTICLE 14 – Child Care Workforce**

- One Stop Hub
  - Streamlining paperwork and communication is welcomed!
  - **Exclusive use of One Stop Hub for licensing actions, background checks & correction orders is restrictive due to technology use by providers and reliable internet use (think power outages & internet service provider issues).**
- Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship Grant Program 459.8 Sec. 16. [119B.252]
  - Welcome opportunity to train new providers.
  - **We have a concern that Licensed Family Child Care, though included, will be slighted in use. Historically, higher ed programs have not looked to family child care providers as a viable career option and have been known to dissuade students from aiming in this direction.**
- Child Care Retention Program 461.3+
  - MCCPIN supports and appreciate the inclusion of this program to continue the grants providers have received and been appreciative.
    - Increase of FTEs to 2 is critical for LFCCs.
    - Broad use is positive so providers can designate where investment is needed.
  - **Questions & concerns:**
    - **Line 462.8: Hope this indicates that providers will not be penalized for taking vacations and needed closures such as for COVID.**
    - **Line 462.22: *employee* does this mean someone other than the provider?**
    - **463.24 +: Access Equity areas need to be removed or modified.**
      - Equity knows no true boundary.
      - Often children/families within these designated areas are being served by providers 'across the line'.
      - Therefore, the provider who is truly caring and supporting these families is not being supported.
      - First round of grants early in the pandemic utilized this definition.
      - It was proven to be inequitable to those actually serving families.



**Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN) is a statewide, 501c3 non-profit, provider volunteer association with the mission: *to support, promote, and strengthen the profession of licensed family childcare thereby enriching the lives of providers, children, families, and communities.***

- Child Care provider access to technology grants
  - Welcomed support greatly needed in many areas of the state
  - In particular the training aspect is critical as LFCCs often care for children 10 hours a day and have either not had the experience with technology or have the time to climb the learning curve.
  - Expectation of providers using the One Stop Hub require that this technology support be implemented.
- Direction to commissioner; child care and early education professional wage scale, Line 469.17
  - **The Great Start Task Force debated this item on many levels.**
  - **LFCCs want to ensure that a wage scale truly recognizes our small business aspect rather than applying employee perspective only.**
- Recognizing Comparable Competencies to Achieve Comparable Compensation Task Force
  - Critical step to establish a well thought out and supported approach to these competencies.
    - Higher education is not a given need to support children in their early childhood education.
    - Higher education is not obtainable for many providers as they work long hours and often have limited support to continue education.
    - Minority and lower socio-economic providers are frequently most limited.
  - **Appreciate inclusion of an educator who works in licensed family child care setting.**
    - **Critical voice as trainers who are LFCCs have a broad educational background and application for assisting in evaluating these comparable competencies.**

Thank you for your work and the opportunity to offer input on this Omnibus bill.

Cyndi Cunningham

651-470-4857

# ST PAUL

## AREA CHAMBER

401 N Robert Street, Suite 150  
St. Paul, MN 55101

MAKING CONNECTIONS THAT COUNT

May 2, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund  
2107 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Tina Liebling  
477 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund, Chair Liebling, and Conference Committee Members:

On behalf of the 1,700+ members and affiliates of the St. Paul Area Chamber, who together represent more than 3 million employees and their families, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Health and Human Services Omnibus (S.F. 2955).

Addressing the benefits cliff is one of the St. Paul Area Chamber's top advocacy priorities of 2023. For low-wage workers seeking advancement, the realities of public assistance policies are often an inhibitor to success. Workers face a benefits cliff when they receive public assistance, earn a raise, and then discover that they now make too much to receive their benefits, but the pay increase is not enough to make up the difference of lost benefits.


While some may not immediately recognize this as a business issue, it absolutely is. Businesses want to retain and advance talented employees, especially in this tight labor market. When taking on a promotion would cause a worker a net loss in overall resources to support their family, it negatively impacts the employee's professional development as well as the employer's operations.

Specifically, we are supportive of the following provisions contained in both the House and Senate bills:

- Capping at 30% the amount of "unearned income" an individual must pay towards their Housing Support costs.
- Changing MN Family Investment Program income reporting requirements from monthly to every six months.
- Providing for one year of medical assistance eligibility for children under 21, once deemed eligible for the program, and eligibility up to age six for those children under six.

We appreciate the efforts of both the House and Senate to address the benefits cliff in this budget.

Respectfully,



B Kyle  
President & CEO  
St. Paul Area Chamber





May 1, 2023

Re: HF2292-Children and Families Early Education Finance and Policy Bill

Dear Chair Pinto, Chair Kunesh, and Conference Committee Members,

On behalf of all families with young children across the state of Minnesota, we thank you for including our full request for Early Childhood Family Education support staff in HF2292.

Our request for \$500,000 of new money is intended to cover expenses of both positions along with a small operating budget. We have co-created the attached framework with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to highlight how the operating budget will be spent. This budget will allow us to provide essential professional development and educational support, assist with statewide marketing and outreach, and facilitate collaborations with other local agencies. It will also allow us to enhance our home visiting efforts, work with higher education institutions to prepare more licensed educators (a workforce issue), and collect, analyze, and share data on program effectiveness.

Since the early 2000's ECFE has had either no state leadership or a fraction of one position providing program guidance. It is imperative that the two positions at MDE have access to an adequate operating budget to provide these essential services that have been largely neglected, or fragmented under the responsibility of each individual program.

We are asking that the committee fully fund ECFE support staff at \$500,000 so that children and families will continue to receive high quality parenting support and education in every school district in Minnesota. Thank you.

Sincerely,

MNAFEE Advocacy Committee Members  
Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education

## Information for Legislators related to HF862 and SF1240

Legislators have requested specific information about how funds appropriated in the bills for use by the proposed two new full-time equivalent Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) staff to provide operational support and guidance to Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program staff would be used.

The following is a list of potential responsibilities of persons licensed in parent and family education who would be serving in the two new proposed positions. This list was created by members of the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) Advocacy Committee in response to Legislators' requests and as a resource for discussion with current MDE staff that oversee work with ECFE. The sections in bold are taken from the language in HF862 and SF1240 with additional ideas not in bold added for elaboration without intent to include any additional language in the bill. The suggested *potential costs* listed in Italics were added by MDE staff overseeing ECFE.

**HF 862 Subd. 12a. Support staff. (a) The department must employ two full-time equivalent staff to serve as resources for programs described in this section. The staff person must provide operational support and guidance to programs, including but not limited to”:**

1. **“providing professional development and education support”** for ECFE teachers and program coordinators/administrators through online and in-person state and regional workshops, a yearly annual conference, and sharing current program expectations and research information relevant to parenting and child development and best practices for developing and promoting meaningful learning opportunities for all Minnesota families with young children
  - *Possible costs: Bringing in national experts*
  - *Possible costs: Expenses related to offering in person professional development in various regions of the state*
  - *Possible costs: Utilize and compensate regional networking group leaders to provide services/support*
2. **“assisting with marketing and outreach”** including material development of various types for statewide distribution and use, encouragement of diverse means of outreach to families in local ECFE programs, and representation of ECFE at relevant meetings, conferences, etc.
  - *Possible costs: Videos and other market tools*
  - *Possible costs: Advertising costs*
3. **and facilitating collaborations with public and private organizations serving families,”** leveraging support and funds for strengthening capacity to meet the diverse needs of families
  - *Possible costs: travel to meetings*
4. Providing orientation and guidance for new program coordinators/administrators and ongoing guidance and technical assistance for all ECFE program coordinators/administrators
  - *Possible costs: travel/site visits*
5. Communicating regularly with local school district ECFE program coordinators/administrators and other school district personnel responsible for ECFE
  - *Possible costs: travel/site visits*
  - *Possible costs: virtual meeting platform*

6. Encouraging recruitment and retention of highly qualified licensed parent and family educators and early childhood educators throughout the state, a work force issue
  - *Possible costs: work group facilitation*
  - *Possible costs: mentoring supports*
  - *Possible costs: marketing ECFE positions as a career option*
7. Working to increase the number of higher education teacher educator programs preparing licensed parent educators and early childhood educators
8. Overseeing collection and analysis of local school district Community Needs Assessments including promotion of responses to Needs Assessment results, and overseeing data collection and reporting about program delivery, program participants and participation, etc. in a manner that completely and accurately captures data about the unique services of ECFE
  - *Possible costs: Inclusion in IT systems, upgrades and maintenance*
  - *Possible costs: data analysis*
9. Encouraging evaluation of outcomes of ECFE for parents and children
  - *Possible costs: IT systems and data analysis*
10. Supporting implementation of current home visiting programming within ECFE and connections with other home visiting networks
  - *Possible costs: networking events and/or costs associated with hosting a conference*
  - *Possible costs: contractor to facilitate coordination of home visiting models*
11. Supporting and guiding implementation of all program requirements within Minnesota statutes including support for English learners, both parents and children; promotion of children's early literacy; prevention of child abuse and neglect, etc. with the goal of promoting and supporting universal access for all families with young children and equitable delivery of ECFE among all school districts.
  - *Possible costs: contracting with Mental Health consultants*

(See [Minnesota Statutes 2022, Section 124D.13 \(mn.gov\)](#) Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Programs and

[Minnesota Statutes 2022, Section 124D.135 \(mn.gov\)](#) Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Revenue)

To: Chair Pinto, Chair Kunesh, and Conference Committee Members

From: University of Minnesota Twin Cities & Minnesota Association for Family & Early Education (MNAFEE) representing Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

Subject: HF2292-Children and Families Early Education Finance and Policy Bill

Date: May 1, 2023

Dear Chair Pinto, Chair Kunesh, and Conference Committee Members

Thank you for all your work and support to enhance the Early Childhood and Family Education workforce. **We are writing to ask that the Parent and Family Education License be included as eligible for consideration of funding in [HF 2292](#).**

Minnesota's unique Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) program serves both parents and children and requires two distinct teacher licensures: The Early Childhood Education birth-3rd grade license for teaching children birth-5 yrs old and the Parent and Family Education license for teaching adults. The Parent and Family Education license is distinct from the Early Childhood license in that it prepares professionals with the content and skills to not only understand children's development, but also how to support parents and caregivers as adult learners. ECFE programs are unable to provide services without these licensed parent and family educators.

The language we propose adding to the HF 2292 is underlined in red below:

**Sec. 17. APPROPRIATIONS; DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.**

Subdivision 1. Department of Education. The sums indicated in this section are appropriated from the general fund to the Department of Education for the fiscal years designated.

Subd. 2. Grow Your Own. (a) For grants to develop, continue, or expand Grow Your Own programs under Minnesota Statutes, sections 122A.73:

\$3,000,000.....2024

\$3,000,000.....2025

(b) This is a onetime appropriation and is subject to the requirements under Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.731, subdivision 4.

Subd. 3. Early childhood and family education teacher shortage. (a) For grants to Minnesota institutions of higher education to address the early childhood and family education teacher shortage:

\$ 490,000 ..... 2024

\$ 490,000 ..... 2025

(b) Grant money may be used to provide tuition and other supports to students.

(c) Any balance in the first year does not cancel but is available in the second year.

(d) This is a onetime appropriation.





**Sec. 5. [122A.731] GRANTS FOR GROW YOUR OWN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND  
FAMILY EDUCATOR PROGRAMS.**

Subd. 2. Grow Your Own Early Childhood And Family Educator programs. (a) 5.9 Minnesota-licensed family child care or licensed center-based child care programs, school district or charter school early learning programs, Head Start programs, institutions of higher education, and other community partnership nongovernmental organizations may apply for a grant to host, build, or expand an early childhood educator preparation program that leads to an individual earning the credential or degree needed to enter or advance in the early childhood education workforce. Examples include programs that help interested individuals earn the child development associate (CDA) credential, an associate's degree in child development, or a bachelor's degree in early childhood studies or early childhood and family education licensures. The grant recipient must use at least 80 percent of grant money for student stipends, tuition scholarships, or unique student teaching or field placement experiences.

By adding family to the wording of this section, we allow potential licensed parent and family educators to access this funding based on the needs of the school districts.

Thank you,

University of Minnesota, Parent and Family Education

Minnesota Association for Family and Early Educators (MNAFEE)



# Great by Eight

Transformational Education



Proven, evidence-based programming  
Holistic, wrap-around services

# 2022 Impact



11,368  
family visits  
in 11 Counties



1,850  
clients served  
1,057 children / 792 adults  
623 families



1,362  
resource referrals  
for services

89%

of newborns born at or above  
healthy birth weight

98%\*

of Way to Grow children  
prepared for kindergarten

81%\*

of K–3 students demonstrated  
growth in reading level  
assessments

86%\*

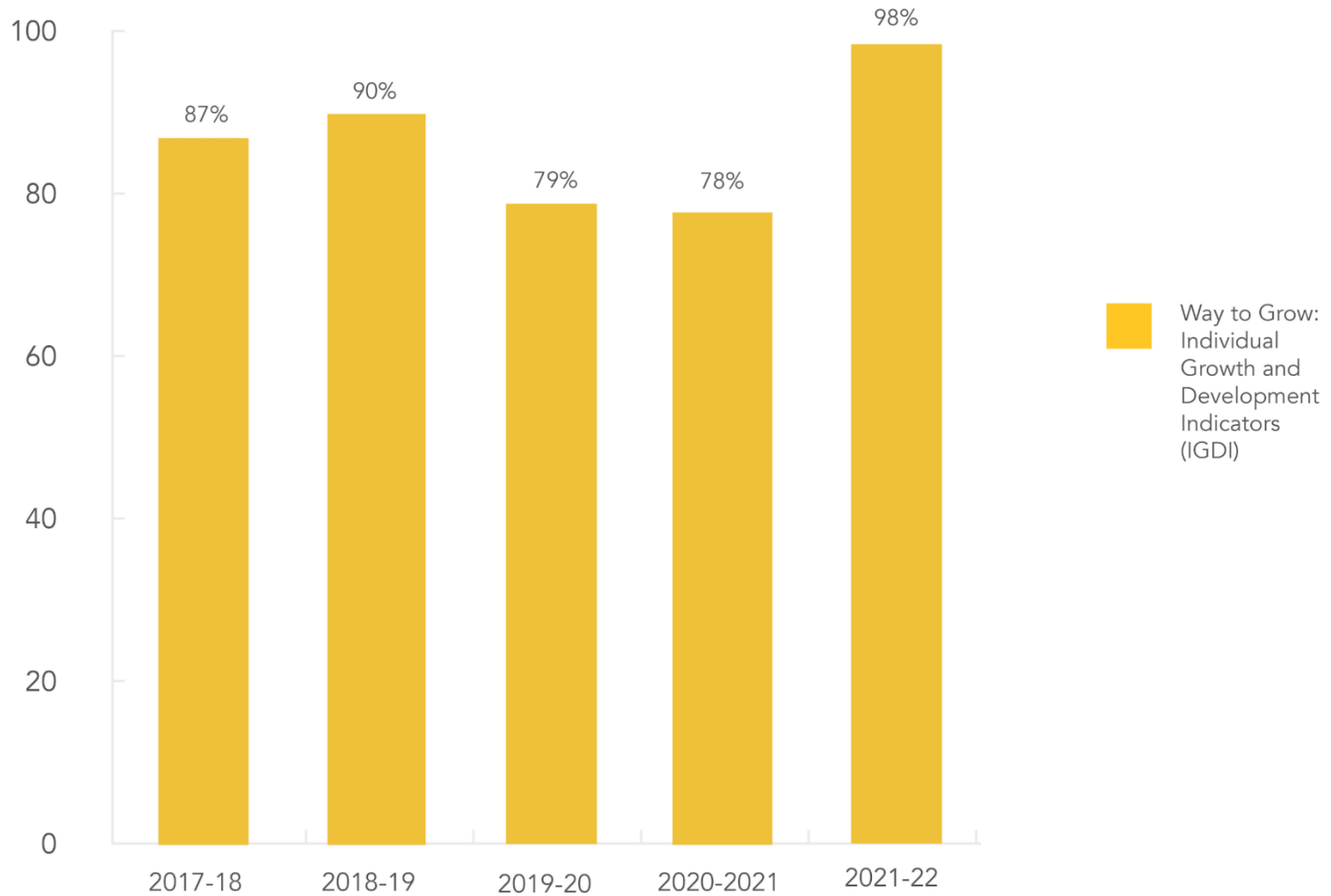
of parenting teens did not have  
a repeat pregnancy

86%\*

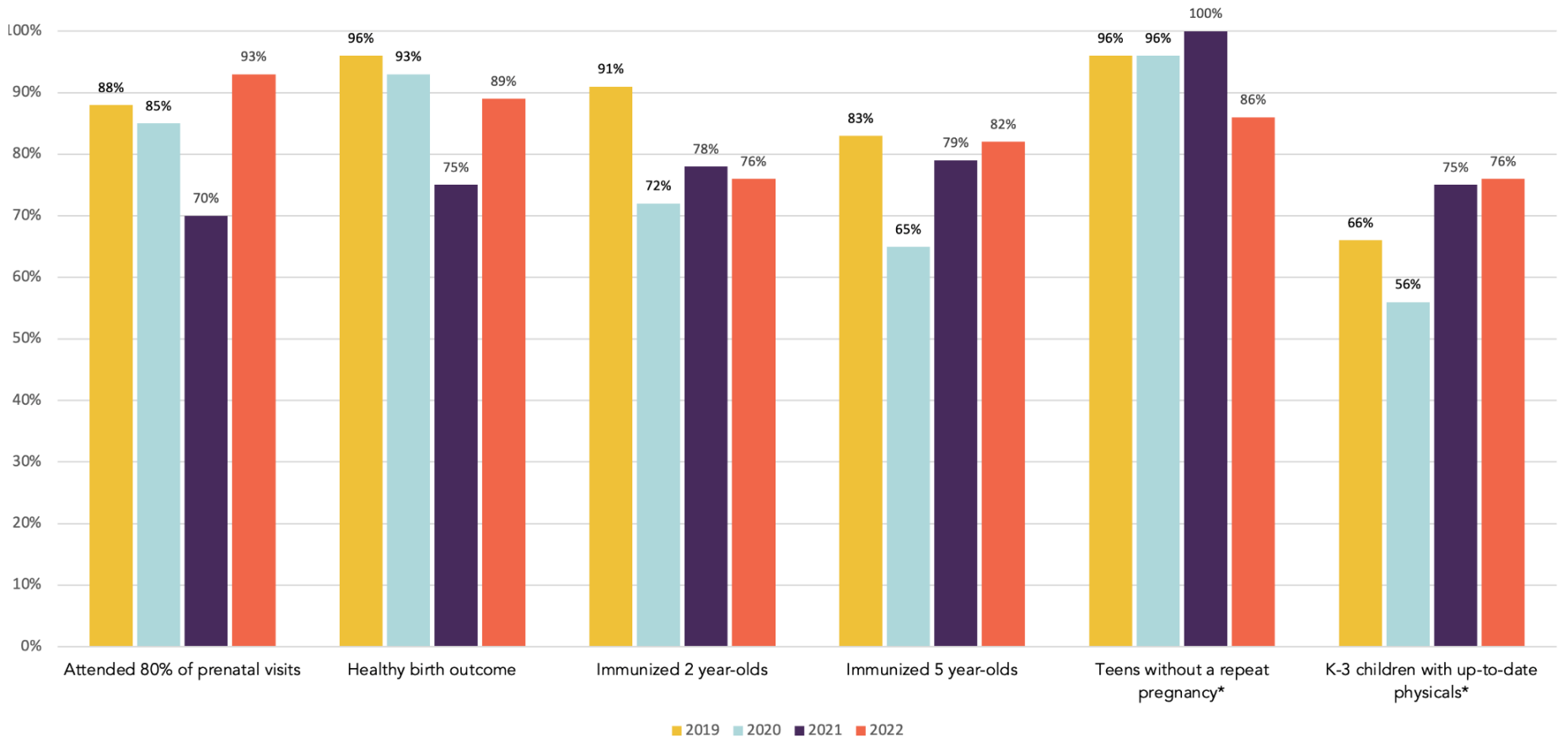
of families attended parent-  
teacher conference

\* 2021 – 2022 school year metric

# Kindergarten Readiness

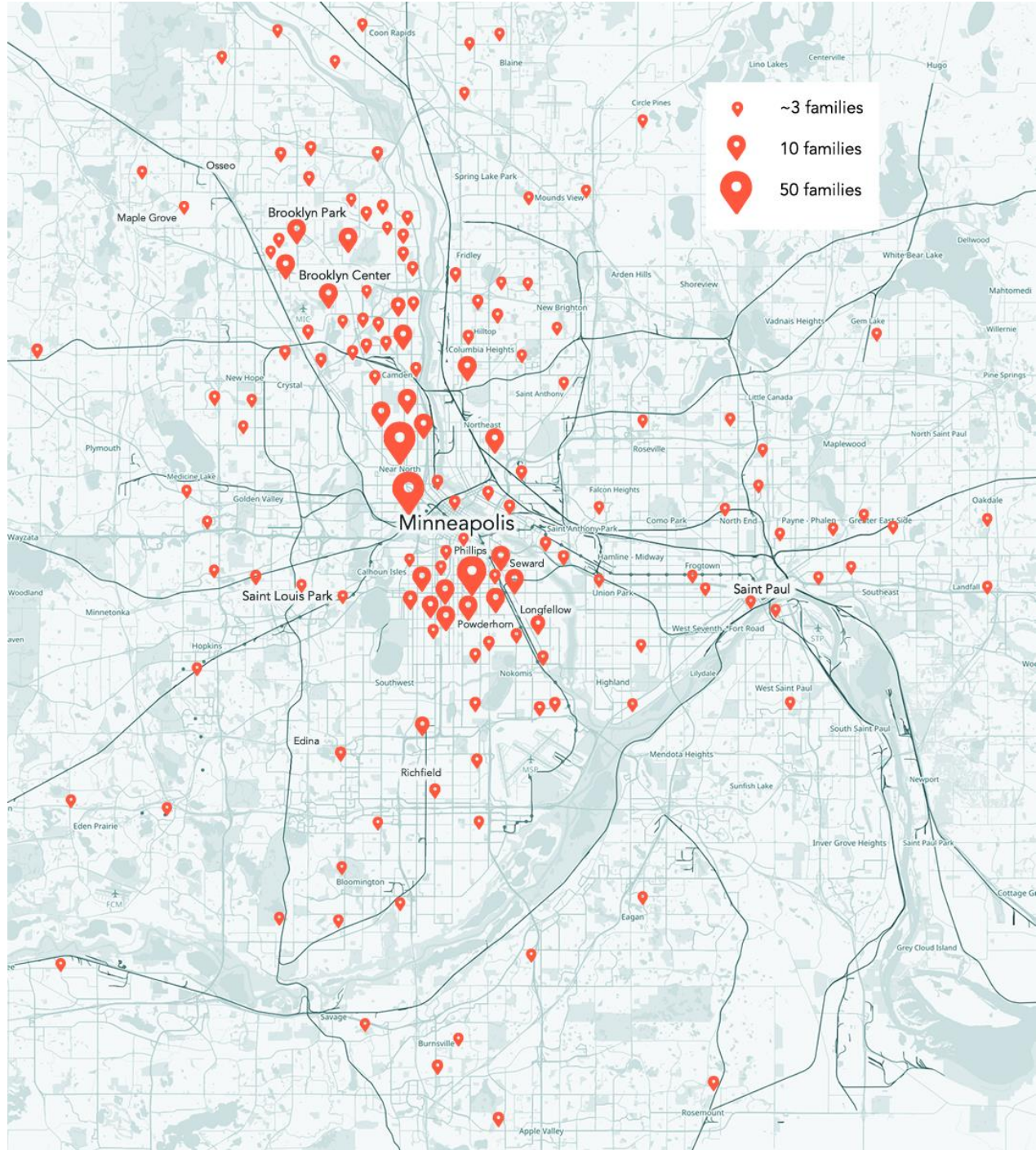


# Health Metrics



\* School Year Metrics







Way to Grow seeks to reach an additional 300 families over the next several years as we work to effect multi-generational impact for both parents and students in the educational system. **We ask conferees to accept the House position to provide \$300,000 to Way to Grow for FY24-25.** This level of funding would allow the organization to serve an additional 100 families. The annual cost to provide services is approximately \$3,500 per family, and is based on the number of home visits, the number of children, the level of support and resources needed to stabilize the family, and additional materials provided to support parent and child education in the home.

100 families will receive:

- Needed educational tools to successfully prepare children to enter the education system.
- Intensive, wrap-around Great by Eight programming through home visits; programming includes child development, social/emotional development, health, literacy, math along with needed resources to stabilize households when needed (i.e., housing, mental health support, food support, parent education and referrals to high quality childcare, and other basic needs)
- Opportunity to build social network with other parents and families to strengthen community bonds.

**MISSION:** Our mission is to work closely with parents and communities, ensuring that all children in our communities are born healthy, stay healthy, and are prepared for school.

Our **VISION** is to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life.

Way to Grow has been a leading model for early learning and education programming in the Twin Cities since 1989. Addressing gaps in early childhood education through intensive home visiting services and supportive programming, Way to Grow's second-generation approach has reached approximately 60,000 people over the course of the last 33+ years.

**Effective Programming:** Great by Eight is a holistic, evidence-based program that builds a supportive educational pipeline for isolated, under-resourced families with children prenatally through age 8 (3rd grade). Families receive culturally relevant family support and stabilization, health education, parent education on early childhood development and support with elementary education, while their children learn the critical foundations to read and succeed in school and beyond.

**Way to Grow's home-visiting program, Great by Eight combines culturally relevant family support and stabilization, health education, and parent engagement with early and elementary education.**

**Proven Track Record:** Way to Grow has perfected its programmatic elements over the past 33+ years that have proven to effectively generate positive outcomes for families. In the last school year, **98% of Way to Grow Pre-K students passed assessments, and started Kindergarten with the strong academic and social/emotional foundation needed to be successful now and into the future.** The percentage of Way to Grow children assessed as ready for kindergarten has remained consistently well above the statewide average of 60%, even during Covid-19, with a five-year average of over 80%. In our K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade program, 81% of students demonstrated growth in reading level assessments. Families that enroll in Way to Grow during the early elementary years may be up to two grade levels behind their peers. Now, they have the literacy foundation to read and succeed in school.

Parent engagement in grades K-3 has remained consistently high, with an average of 85% of parents reading with their children weekly, and at least 86% of parents attending parent teacher conferences. The percentage of two and five-year-olds up to date on annual immunizations has also held steady at 80% or higher.

**A Good Investment:** National studies confirm the value and efficacy of models like Great by Eight. Strategic investments in these proven models allow traditionally disinvested communities to achieve a more level and productive playing field—ultimately, this helps build stronger communities, a stronger economy, and a stronger workforce, giving funding of early childhood education an extremely high return on investment. This bears out in a **cost-benefit analysis of Way to Grow’s programming issued by the Constellation Fund in 2021, which found that every dollar invested in Way to Grow results in \$9.27 in long-term benefit in eliminating poverty, demonstrating that investing in early education can result in extraordinary returns—not just for children and families, but for the entire community.**

**Our Expansion:** In 2018, Way to Grow began expanding our footprint to reach even deeper into Minneapolis and surrounding suburban areas to serve more families. During the pandemic, we adapted Great by Eight to continue to support families by launching virtual home visits and a virtual tutoring initiative to help 100+ children catch up academically after Covid-related disruptions to classroom learning. We were successful. As we come out of the pandemic, the time is right to continue our growth trajectory and increase our impact.

**Growth Strategy:** Way to Grow’s leadership team has developed a three-year strategy to increase our footprint, working with families with children ages 0-8, residing in Phillips, North and Near North, Northeast, Jordan, Seward, Powderhorn, and Webber-Camden neighborhoods in Minneapolis, and families in Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, St. Louis Park, Richfield and the surrounding communities, targeting neighborhoods with the highest number of children and the greatest number of low-income families. Each area will receive the Great by Eight holistic services



with an emphasis on customization based on community needs and strategic partnership availability for each area.

**Our goal is to grow our organization to reach an additional 300 families over the next 3-5 years, while increasing our ability to effect long-term changes with parents and the educational system.**

May 1, 2023

Conference Committee Members,

On behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition, we would like to share our support for many of the provisions that support children and families. 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.

In addition to the incredible need to invest in programs that help children access child care and early learning (early learning scholarships and making permanent voluntary pre-k slots), we were particularly excited to see the inclusion of prioritization of 0-3 year olds with early learning scholarships, The Family Partnership Executive Function curriculum, funding for ECFE staff at MDE, and the Grow your Own program in the House Children and Families omnibus bill. The combination of all of these priorities moves us towards seeing in full the recommendations of the Great Start Task Force, and sets us on a path where children and families receive the support they need, and the child care and early learning workforce is compensated at the level we need to stabilize the sector.

We support a robust system of policies that gives children and families access to a continuum of programs that promote healthy childhood development. We must maintain and continue to grow equitable investments in critical programs based on ongoing community feedback and guidance.

Sincerely,

Carrie Zelin Johnson  
Start Early Funders  
Coalition Coordinator

Nancy Jost  
Public Policy  
Committee

Denise Mayotte  
Public Policy  
Committee

Allison Corrado  
Public Policy  
Committee

May 1, 2023

Dear Chair Kunesh, Chair Pinto and members of the Children and Families Early Education Conference Committee,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to urge the conference committee to include investments to support families and children with access to early learning opportunities in many forms. Investments in people who experience inequities are critical in building stronger pathways to economic prosperity and well-being.

For 40 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$45 million in organizations across the state and advanced policies so women, girls, and their families can thrive. Our research with the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the Humphrey School shows that we continue to have stark disparities when it comes to families' ability to: access care for their children; access safe and trauma-informed services and housing as survivors of sex trafficking; access healthcare and healing; and attain quality educational outcomes.

Women are the center of families. For the more than 50% of working mothers who are the primary breadwinners in families in Minnesota – and 74% of Black mothers and 77% of Indigenous mothers – we know access to safe and affordable childcare is essential. Investments in high-quality childcare that provides educational opportunities for our youngest learners need to include a broad spectrum of proposals from scholarships to expanding pre-k and policies from creating more access to CCAP to other programs that make care affordable for families.

Educational disparities continue to limit the potential of our state's future and our families. As a result of inequities in our educational systems, we know that Black, Indigenous, and children of color face lifelong challenges to achieving economic prosperity. We support funding and policies that focus on the children most frequently shortchanged, through investments in special education, hiring and retaining teachers of color, menstrual equity, and school-based meals so all children can learn.

These investments will create a more equitable and just economy for all Minnesotans by investing in the childcare system and its workers, and investing in our early education system for those who face the greatest need.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez

President and CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota



Minnesota Child Care Provider  
Information Network  
PO Box 1136  
Prior Lake, MN 55372  
651-636-1989  
[www.mccpin.org](http://www.mccpin.org)

March 14, 2023

RE: HF1806 – Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Mister Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cyndi Cunningham. I have been a Licensed Family Child Care Provider in St. Paul for 26 years and am the current Public Policy Chairperson for Minnesota Child Care Provider Information Network (MCCPIN), a 501c3 sitewide association for Licensed Child Care Providers.

I am testifying on behalf of MCCPIN in support of the expectation changing from “may” to “must”. Such a small set of words with such a big impact.

Many statements are made about children being ‘ready’ for school and decisions being made based on those statements.

However, since it hasn’t been a requirement for schools to actually evaluate this in any standardized method, there really has been no factual basis.

Yet, changes are made, some settings perceived as being of more value and successful all with out factual statistics.

We would like to see added to this expectation of an assessment that the child’s settings prior to Kindergarten be included. This will allow evaluation of a child’s previous experience to be taken into consideration and truly improvements in children’s live prior to kindergarten be targeted so children can succeed.

Thank you for your time and efforts to continue to improve the lives and success of children in our state.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Cunningham