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Doctors for Early Childhood

Dale Dobrin, MD, FAAP
Mary Meland, MD, FAAP
Ada Alden, EdD, Parent Educator
Roger Sheldon, MD, FAAP

Email: ddobrin@slpeds.com
www.doctorsforearlychildhood.org

Chair Dave Pinto, House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee
March 28, 2023

Minnesota House of Representatives, St Paul, MN

Re: HF 238, H0238DE1

Dear Chair Pinto, Vice Chair Keeler, Lead Daniels, and Committee Members,

Thank you all for your strong work in favor of children and families thus far in the legislative session. We watched with great interest as you reviewed your omnibus budget bill.

Our main interest is in funding the needs of youngest children and their families, especially those who need help the most. We are optimistic about many of the recommendations we heard this morning. The Early Learning Scholarship funding increases and the funding of the base in coming biennia are both good starts. Hopefully, more will be done in coming sessions as well.

Similarly, the increased funding for CCAP and the recommendations for enhancing provider and worker quality are bold actions. Childcare, of course, is sorely needed in all corners of Minnesota and will deliver boosts to communities' economies, earnings of families, and early care and learning for babies and toddlers while parents are working.

Similarly, ECFE funding supports child development and ultimately school readiness by helping young families with the developmental tools they desire in raising their children. We wish this important service could have greater increases, but approve of the base funding starting in 2024.

Home Visiting is an important service as reported in a position paper by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), "Pediatrics" October, 2017. We encourage Minnesota to better fund the nurses, social workers, and others visiting children and families.

You recommend increases in funding for Reach out and Read, also endorsed by the AAP. As with quality early care and learning, ROR books are cornerstones for learning, and promote interactions between young children and parents and caregivers.

As with Home Visiting and ECFE, Paid Family Leave enhances bonding, earliest learning, and low stress nurturing in the first 12 weeks after a baby is born. Mitigating financial stress is critical for parents at this early stage. We hope this bill will be adequately funded in this moment of great state surplus, and that the appropriate committee will bring it to the House floor.

In a similar context, EITC and CTSs have been shown to enhance family wellbeing in many ways. Please also consider generous funding for navigators to help families reach those services they need and to minimize administrative burden.

Thanks again for your work!

Warm regards,

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Dale Dobrin, MD, Ada Alden, EdD, Mary Meland, MD, and Roger Sheldon, MD