



**Greater Twin Cities
United Way**
gtcuw.org

March 14, 2022

Dear Members of the Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee:

We write in support of House File 2402 to expand access to early learning scholarships for eligible families with children from birth up to age five.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to build pathways toward prosperity and equity for all, touching over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. We fund over 95 direct service organizations and coalitions through grantmaking across our three impact areas of Educational Success, Household Stability and Economic Opportunity. We know that one of the biggest drivers of economic stability and overall well-being for families is their children's access to quality care, learning and socialization opportunities at an early age. To advance and align early childhood efforts across the state, Greater Twin Cities United Way also serves as the fiscal host for the Start Early Funders Coalition, which includes more than 20 funders across Minnesota.

Early care and learning start at birth and are critical to supporting a child's healthy development. Paired with stable relationships, high quality early care and education has been documented to have long-term benefits that build strong social skills, improved academic success and healthy brain development. From birth to age three, a child's brain produces more than one million connections each second, with up to 90 percent of development occurring by age five.

Despite these important benefits, nearly 31,000 children in Minnesota still do not have access to quality early care and learning opportunities. These gaps in accessible care are most prevalent for our youngest children under the age of three and disproportionately impact Families of Color and parents in rural areas, often hindering their ability to fully participate in the workforce. Increasing early learning scholarship investments to include children from birth to age five represents an important step toward building a more stable, accessible and robust early childhood system in Minnesota.

Thank you,

Kristen Rosenberger
Director, Advocacy & External Engagement
Greater Twin Cities United Way