Statement of

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Re: Early Education Provisions in End-of-Session Compromise

May 24, 2017

“This early education compromise has Minnesota trending in the right direction, but the progress is much slower than our most vulnerable children need.

We’re pleased that early education investments increased by $70 million for the upcoming biennium, and that the new funding is more targeted to the low-income children who need it most. It’s also positive that some of the new funding can be used for children younger than age four. Finally, moving forward, all new Early Learning Scholarships will be as flexible as they were originally designed to be.

However, we’re disappointed that there is only enough new funding to help a fraction of the 40,000 low-income Minnesota children under age five who are unable to access high quality early education, we had hoped to help more of those children.

It’s also disappointing that 70% of the funding is earmarked for what will largely be part-day school-based programs, rather than empowering low-income parents to choose an early education program that best fits their work schedule, culture, preferences and location, including full-day, full-year options. That earmarked funding is also not portable, so children may be cut off from their early learning whenever their parents change homes or jobs.

Compromises are never perfect. For a state with some of the worst achievement gaps in the nation, we’re not moving forward nearly as rapidly as our most vulnerable children need. But we are moving forward.”

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Note: Close Gaps by 5 is a nonprofit organization championing the use of high quality early education to close Minnesota’s worst-in-the-nation achievement gaps by age five. Background on Close Gaps by 5 is available at www.closegapsby5.org.

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