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February 8, 2018

The Honorable Mark Dayton  
 Governor, State of Minnesota  
 101 State Capitol Building  
 Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

We have heard that your administration may be considering ways to help employees in the early education and care sector. If so, we have a few ideas for you to consider.

As you know, Minnesota's young children and families need a stable, well-trained early education and care workforce. There are several ways Minnesota leaders could promote important workforce-oriented goals:

**PUT MORE RESOURCES INTO THE EARLY ED SECTOR.** In order to attract, develop, and retain well-trained early educators, this sector needs more families with the ability to pay for quality programs. Doing so would make training and retention goals more financially feasible.

- **Early Learning Scholarships.** The best way to do this would be to give 35,000 left-behind Minnesota children uncapped Early Learning Scholarships (Pathway I type) so they could access high quality early education. These new Scholarships would bring in more families with the ability to pay, which would help with training and retention goals. Beyond the workforce benefits, Scholarships also are the best available tool for closing Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation achievement gaps, because they: 1) start very early in life; 2) target resources to the most at-risk low-income children; 3) demand the use of kindergarten-readiness best practices; and 4) are flexible and portable to meet individual families' needs.

- **Reformed CCAP.** Another potential way to stabilize the early education sector workforce would be to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), but only if CCAP was first reformed to require the use of kindergarten-readiness best practices and was made much more flexible and portable. These reforms were recommended by the Minnesota Early Learning (MELF) and are needed to make CCAP a more effective and efficient tool for closing achievement gaps than it currently is.

**HELP WORKERS WITH TAX CREDITS.** Another way to attract and retain well-trained early educators would be with a state income tax credit. In 2011, MELF recommended tax credits for early educators who met these criteria:

- **Expertise.** Tax credits would be available to early educators who had improved their relevant education and training.
  - Rationale: Children benefit from well-prepared early educators, so education and training should be rewarded and incentivized.
- **Continuity.** Tax credits would be available to early educators that had been at the same position for a certain number of years.

- Rationale: Children benefit from educator continuity, so continuity should be rewarded and incentivized.
  - **Quality.** Tax credits would be available to early educators who were working for a Parent Aware-rated provider.
    - Rationale: Children in rated programs are making significant k-readiness gains, so those programs and their educators should be rewarded and incentivized.

These policy changes would help give Minnesota a more stable and well-trained early education workforce. They also would help alleviate the child care shortage we are seeing in some parts of Minnesota. Finally, and most importantly, they would help close Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation achievement gaps, which pose such a serious threat to our communities, economy and children.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and for all you have done over the years for Minnesota children under age five. We would very much like to work with you on these issues this session. If you have questions, feel free to contact either of us, or Close Gaps by 5's Executive Director Ericca Maas.

Sincerely,



Ken Powell  
Former CEO, General Mills



Michael Ciresi  
Founding Partner, Ciresi Conlin LLP