

Statement of

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Re: House and Senate Early Education Proposals
April 13, 2016

For Minnesota children, and those committed to using early education to narrow Minnesota's shameful achievement gaps, there is good news and bad news in these two proposals.

GOOD NEWS

The good news is that the House and Senate are both investing in early education in general. Having said that, it also matters *how* we invest, because research tells us that some approaches are more effective and efficient than others.

We're pleased that the House proposal includes a one-time investment of \$2 million for Parent Aware. While we would like to see the program fully funded at the \$15 million per year level, the House plan will help more Minnesota children benefit from kindergarten-readiness best practices. It also will ensure taxpayers maximize their large investments in early education.

Finally, we were very pleased to see that the House made Early Learning Scholarships more flexible, portable and available to younger children. Those excellent policy reforms may not get as much attention as high profile funding issues, but they will benefit a lot of Minnesota children.

BAD NEWS

The unfortunate news is that investments in helping more low-income children access high quality early care and education are missing in the House proposal, and misdirected in the Senate proposal.

Access Investments. We were encouraged that the Senate invested in helping low-income children. But the Senate's proposal to invest in a 2-hour-per-day schools-only model that is only available to 4-year-old children can be summarized like this: Too little, too late, too inflexible.

The Senate and House both neglected to increase funding for flexible Early Learning Scholarships that allow Minnesota's most vulnerable children to get multiple years and more than 2 hours per day of early education services. With the achievement gap measurable before age one, Minnesota can't afford to wait three years until age four, before we get our most vulnerable children into stimulating early learning environments.

We look forward to working with bipartisan leaders to improve these proposals as the legislative session progresses. Minnesota needs early education investments that are flexible, targeted, and accountable for quality, and begin as early in life as possible.

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