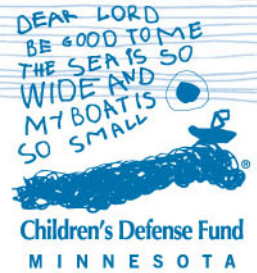


10-10-10 March for Children Because *All Children Need a Strong Beginning*



Healthy brain development begins before birth and continues into adulthood with 90% of the brain formed in the first five years of life.

Early interactions with the surrounding world shape how the brain is developed. The health of the mother, sufficient nutrition, comprehensive health care, stable and safe housing, interactions with caring adults, and access to educational experiences are all necessary for healthy brain development.

Because 80% of Minnesota children live in households where all parents are in the work force, quality, affordable childcare is essential.

- Average, annual cost for licensed infant care is between \$4,700 and \$13,000 for Minnesota families, the 5th most expensive state in the country.
- The average yearly cost of center-based child care for a 4-year-old in Minnesota, is more than the tuition at a four-year in-state college.
- Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for low-income working families is not fully funded by the state and thousands of families are on a waiting list, forcing families to settle for make-shift arrangements for their children or leave the workforce.

Early childhood and home visiting programs can offer all children a foundation for future school success.

- One research study found participants in a high quality preschool program earned an average of \$20,517 more annually in adulthood than non-participants.
- Minnesota Head Start provides early education for low-income children, but 68% of eligible children cannot access this program due to funding.
- Only 10.6% of Minnesota's 3-year-olds and 15.7% of the state's 4-year-olds were enrolled in state funded prekindergarten, Head Start or special education programs.

Children benefit when parents get the support they need.

Minnesota's parent education program, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a national model for parent education but is not available in every community. 40% of Minnesota parents with children between birth and kindergarten age, participated in ECFE in 2003-04 school year.

Giving All Minnesota Children a Strong Beginning is Possible.

Early education programs, quality affordable child care, parent educational opportunities and programs to identify and address child development issues early should be a top investment priority for our state, guaranteeing a more prosperous future for all Minnesotans.

Questions for Candidates:

If elected, what will you do to ensure every Minnesota child receives quality care and early education? What role do you see the state playing in parent education and support?

If elected, what will be your top priority in this area?