Adding a Child Focus to the Minnesota Family Investment Program

House File 2294 is the first time that legislation has directly addressed the well-being of Minnesota children in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) despite the fact that the majority of Minnesotans receiving MFIP assistance are children. House File 2294 provides a unique opportunity to reform MFIP.

House File 2294 adds a needed child focus to MFIP by:

- Providing parents and caregivers receiving MFIP assistance with information about early childhood development and the availability and benefits of early childhood resources, programs and screening during the MFIP orientation and employment plan reviews
- Counting parents' attendance at their child's early childhood activities as work activity
- Defining "child well-being"
- Posting information about child development at MFIP employment and training sites and county agencies
- Recognizing children in the program name - the Minnesota Children and Family Investment Program

House File 2294 can have a significant impact on the lives of Minnesota children because:

- Current MFIP policies pay little attention to a child's well-being, except in terms of its impact on parents' employment
- 7 out of 10 MFIP recipients are children, and nearly half (36,000 children) are age five or younger
- 20,000 MFIP recipients are infants and toddlers
- Young children receiving MFIP assistance are experiencing toxic levels of stress that will harm their developing brains if unaddressed
- Two-thirds of young children in families receiving MFIP assistance, tested during a pilot project, screened positive for potential developmental delays
- Early interventions can have a tremendous positive impact on a child's development

If these improvements to MFIP are not enacted this session, thousands of at-risk infants and toddlers will grow another year older while the unaddressed harmful effects of poverty alter their developing brains.

CDF-MN • 555 Park Street • Suite 410 • Saint Paul, MN 55103 • 651-227-6121 • www.cdf-mn.org

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