

Safe, quality early learning facilities provide the foundation for young children's growth, development

Issues:

- As young children prepare for school, they need access to quality preschool and early childhood facilities to thrive.
- Minnesota is experiencing a child care shortage. The problem is even more stark when considering whether available child care is quality, affordable and available for children of certain ages, especially infants. A major barrier to expanding access to child care is availability of quality child care facilities.
- Demand for these facilities is increasing, as more families with low incomes access early learning programs through the Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships Program and child care subsidies tied to high quality programs under Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- All-day kindergarten is displacing many early childhood programs, further increasing demand for additional early childhood space.

Proposal:

To ensure children have the safe, quality early childhood learning facilities they need to thrive, the Governor's Local Jobs and Projects Plan recommends an investment of \$10 million — half from the general fund and half from bond funds — for statewide grants to help local entities renovate or construct new early learning facilities. The grant program would require a competitive request for proposals process.

Benefits:

- Families in all corners of Minnesota would have access to early childhood programs in safe, high quality facilities, resulting in more geographic equity.
- Facilities are an important part of ensuring quality early learning opportunities for children. When children have access to high quality programs, they are more likely to experience healthy growth and development and be ready for school and for life.
- Organizations of all types and sizes would be eligible to apply for funding. The general fund appropriation would allow nonprofit organizations and tribal governments, which are not directly eligible for bond funding, to apply for a grant, while bond funding would be available to facilities owned by the state or political subdivisions, such as school districts or cities.
- Jobs would be created to renovate facilities or build new ones, stimulating Minnesota's economy.

- Minnesota would support the growing demand for high quality early learning facilities for young children.

Fiscal impact:

For Fiscal Year 2020:

- \$5 million bond funds
- \$5 million general fund

Related information:

- Governor’s Local Jobs and Projects Plan on Minnesota Management & Budget website:
<https://mn.gov/mmb/budget/capital-budget/current/>
- Minnesota Statute 256E.37 on early childhood learning facilities:
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/256E.37>
- Child Care Assistance: Facts and Figures:
<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4745-ENG> (PDF)
- Minnesota Department of Human Services webpage:
<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-care/>

DHS Communications: February 2020