

**Contacts:**

Eliza Appert  
For the SRFC  
952-851-7215  
eappert@tuheim.com

Mitch Anderson  
For the SRFC  
952-851-7217  
manderson@tunheim.com

## **School Readiness Funders Coalition Urges Governor Dayton to Reform Early Childhood Care and Education**

*Legislative Task Force Finds Single Point of Authority and Responsibility will Result in More Efficient Government*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**St. Paul, Minn., January 19, 2011** – The School Readiness Funders Coalition (SRFC), a collaboration of 12 statewide philanthropic organizations dedicated to helping every child in Minnesota achieve school readiness, today hailed new recommendations from a Legislative task force calling for streamlined authority and responsibility for Minnesota's early childhood care and education programs.

Releasing its findings in a report today, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) Task Force recommends the State create a cabinet-level position tasked with funding oversight, rule-making authority and responsibilities for all state early childhood programs.

The Task Force report affirms the SRFC's priority to establish accountability for early childhood care and education through an office of early learning. A single point of authority will lead to needed reforms that would increase the quality, effectiveness and outcomes of our education system. The SRFC urges the Governor to act now and take steps towards these recommendations.

"Minnesota's investments in young children and their families are divided among three separate departments, each with separate vision and oversight," said Steffanie Clothier, early childhood program director for the National Conference on State Legislatures and OEL Task Force consultant. "For states like Minnesota, working to improve outcomes for children who face this same fragmentation, the first step for many is structuring agency authority to better deliver on their goals."

The Task Force report findings are based on studies of nationwide best practices, public comment hearings and the advice of parents and care providers statewide. The vision for an OEL as outlined in the report is supported by advocacy groups from across the state and DFL and Republican legislators alike.

“The report confirms that there is great potential for improvements in our current state structure,” said Senate Deputy Majority Leader Geoff Michel, R-Edina. “We can find creative ways to begin implementing these reforms without additional cost.”

“By creating a single point of authority and responsibility for early childhood programs, we can more effectively address the achievement gap and help prepare our youngest citizens for academic success,” says Representative Sandra Peterson, DFL- New Hope.

#### **About the School Readiness Funders Coalition**

The School Readiness Funders Coalition is made up of 12 members of the philanthropic community, all dedicated to providing leadership and funding for early childhood efforts in Minnesota. The coalition supports a collective policy agenda that strengthens accountability, provides new, focused leadership and starts the larger conversation on adequately funding early childhood education.

Members include Blandin Foundation, Frey Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Grotto Foundation, The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, The Sheltering Arms Foundation, Social Venture Partners, United Ways of Minnesota, and Women’s Foundation of Minnesota.

#### **About the Office of Early Learning Task Force**

The Task Force, established by legislative mandate during the 2010 session, was charged with studying how streamlined responsibility and accountability for early childhood programs could increase government efficiency and better move toward the legislative goal of “all children ready for school by 2020.” The group is comprised of 19 members from around the state, including bipartisan legislators, staff from the three relevant agencies, and representatives from local government, public schools and the community.

###