

Statement of
Ericca Maas
Executive Director
Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR)

Re: Senate Budget Eliminates Parent Aware Program

April 20, 2015

“At a time when Minnesota faces embarrassing education achievement gaps and everyone agrees that we need more early education programs using kindergarten-readiness best practices, the Senate has proposed defunding a relatively inexpensive public program that has been delivering needed quality supports.

Parent Aware is a proven quality improvement and ratings program that has been operating with a budget of about \$9 million in the past year as a partnership between the Minnesota departments of Human Services and Education. Today, the Senate revealed that it has allocated no funding to it for the next two years.

Parent Aware helps early education programs, by giving them quality improvement coaching and grants. It helps about 12,000 parents per month, who are going to the online ratings search tool to inform their child care shopping. It helps 65,000 Minnesota kids currently served in participating child care programs around the state. Why leaders would want to defund a proven program serving those vital functions is perplexing to the broad, bipartisan coalition of groups and leaders who support the proven Parent Aware approach.”

(Note: Federal and private funding have fueled Parent Aware over the last seven years, but both sources are phasing out this year as planned. The Administration requested \$3.5 million for the upcoming biennium and the House has also proposed funding at \$3.5 million for FY16-17. The Department of Human Services estimates that about \$10 million is what is needed in FY16-17 to keep the program at its current service level.)

Contact:
Ericca Maas
Executive Director, PASR
maas@pasrmn.org or 612-367-6395

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