

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

Re: Administration's latest proposal for pre-k investment strategy

May 27, 2015

"The latest Administration proposal includes \$175 million new investment for pre-k education in the upcoming biennium. If invested wisely, that amount could narrow the achievement gap. That's encouraging.

However, only 43% of that pre-k total is targeted to the low-income children who are unable to afford high quality pre-k and are most at-risk of starting kindergarten behind. If we are really serious about the achievement gap, we will help low-income children first before we subsidize thousands of families who can already afford pre-k."

Background: The 100-organization MinneMinds Coalition requested \$300 million/biennium for Early Learning Scholarships to empower the parents of 42,000 low-income 3- to 4-year olds to access high quality early education programs. The Dayton Administration expanded targeted scholarships beginning in 2011, but this year it requested \$0 of new funding in its budget proposal for the coming biennium (scholarships have a base funding level of \$56 million/biennium). The Senate-passed bill included \$5 million/biennium in new funding for scholarships, while the House bill included \$30 million/biennium in new funding for scholarships. The Conference Committee-passed bill included is \$30.7 million/biennium in new scholarship funding."

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