

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CRISIS WORK GROUP

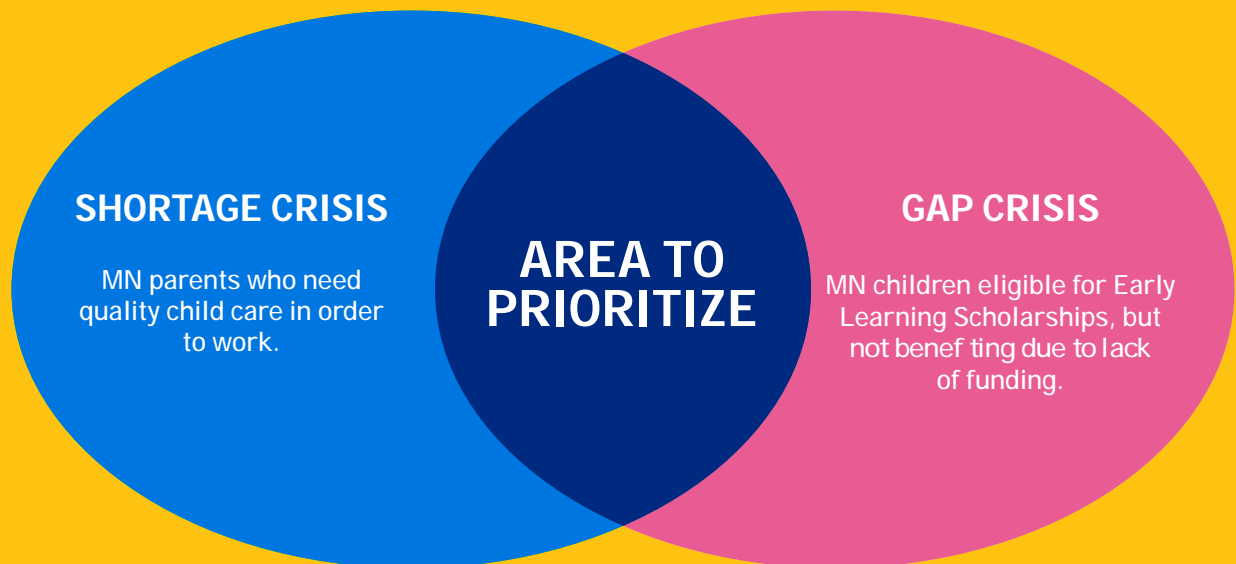
2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

In the fall of 2018, a broad group of organizations came together to address two crises impacting Minnesota's young children: 1) Worst-in-the-nation achievement and opportunity gaps, stemming in part from lack of access to quality child care; and 2) a shortage of quality child care supply for children statewide.

In 2021, legislators must also consider a third crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, which is having a devastating impact on Minnesota's young children and on Minnesota's child care sector. With parents dependent on the availability of child care to work and young children needing access to quality child care to stimulate their fast developing brains, the challenge we collectively face is clear: No child care, no economic recovery.

Our recommended solutions to the achievement gap and shortage crises are also solutions to the pandemic-related crisis. Our session priorities fall in the overlapping center of this chart.

PRIORITIZING CHILD CARE INVESTMENTS



INVEST IN SUPPORTS TO PRESERVE THE SUPPLY OF QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS. Invest in additional targeted grants to child care providers to help offset extra pandemic-related operational costs. Follow the model of the CARES Act-funded public health grants that were awarded from September to December. Tier grant amounts to program size and quality level.

- Background: Child care providers face extra operating costs and reduced revenue as a result of the pandemic. Continued grants will help offset these costs and losses, and will help keep programs afloat. Basing grants on program size and quality level will scale grants appropriately and reward programs that have adopted kindergarten readiness best practices.

INVEST IN TARGETED CHILD CARE FUNDING TO STIMULATE DEMAND AND CLOSE GAPS. Increase the number of flexible, targeted Early Learning Scholarships to empower low-income families to access quality, Parent Aware-rated programs for their children.

- Background: Early Learning Scholarships 1) create consumer demand to fuel recovery of the devastated child care sector and 2) empower low-income families to access the quality child care programs that help children avoid falling into opportunity and achievement gaps.

CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE PARENT AWARE RATINGS. To ensure the Parent Aware Ratings remain as evidence-based; school readiness-focused; culturally and linguistically relevant; and effective as possible, evaluate the ratings to inform improvements.