

Ready 4 K 's response to Governor's QIRS veto

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Otis Statement on Governor Veto of Quality Improvement and Rating System

[Saint Paul, MINN. – June 2, 2006] -- Supporters of improved school readiness throughout Minnesota are surprised and very disappointed in Governor Pawlenty's veto of legislation that would have created a quality improvement and rating system (QIRS).

In response to this veto Ready 4 K President Todd Otis says, "The concept of a QIRS is being adopted throughout the United States as a parent-friendly way to identify quality early care and education, and to improve the skills of early childhood professionals and others who care for young children.

The Governor's veto sends a very negative message to parents and those who care for children, and represents a regrettably short-sighted reaction to a measure that passed with bi-partisan support in the 2006 session of the Minnesota legislature.

Business and community leaders are also seeing the value of a QIRS. The elements that go into a highly rated early childhood program are central to assuring children are ready to succeed in kindergarten.

As public support grows for such a quality improvement and rating system, Minnesota needs to catch up with the rest of the United States, we sincerely hope that the legislature and the Governor will support this strategically important concept in 2007," said Otis.

A recent statewide public opinion poll by Peter Hart Research Associates and Decision Resources found that 71 percent of respondents see early care and education as important priority for policy-makers to address now. In addition, 54 percent of respondents said they would vote for a state legislator or Governor who supports making high quality programs available to all children.

Here is what the Governor said in a statement about vetoing the QIRS:

"The appropriation for the NorthStar Quality Improvement and Rating System has been line-item vetoed. This system considers input driven indicators, rather than measuring meaningful outcomes. For the past ten years, the state has been moving to an accountability system that measures results and outcomes in K-12 public schools. If the objective for quality child care is to ensure that young children are ready for kindergarten, then a child care rating system should be aligned with the K-12 accountability system. An input-driven rating system is not the best way to provide parents with meaningful results regarding the quality of the child care facility.

"Therefore, I am directing the Departments of Education and Human Services to collectively review the concept of a Quality Rating System, and to make recommendations on what would be the necessary components to better align kindergarten readiness of a child to the rating of a child care facility," Governor Pawlenty said.

Our Response:

The Governor's statement is incorrect. The QIRS is completely aligned with the MN Department of Education's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, which are aligned with the K-12 standards. This is confirmed in a March 2005 report from the Minnesota Department of Education, *Alignment of Minnesota K-12 Kindergarten Academic Standards with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress*. The report is available here: <http://education.state.mn.us/mde/static/002627.pdf>.

What's Next:

The Governor's veto does not mean the QIRS is finished. We know that the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) has funding from private contributors that is dedicated to implementing a demonstration of the QIRS. And we'll be back next year at the Legislature to push for quality improvements, including the QIRS. We can also express our disappointment with this veto throughout the election season. Our elected officials -- and especially Governor Pawlenty -- need to hear from constituents about this unwise decision.

Ready 4 K is a 501(c)3 nonprofit bringing together Minnesotans across the state to raise public awareness and advocate for policy change that ensures all children enter kindergarten fully ready to succeed.