Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. My name is Bri Stormer and I am a co-chair of the Policy Committee of the We, the Village Coalition, a group of advocates, non-profit organizations, child care providers, school districts, parents and others working together to ensure all children can access quality care, as their parents choose, and that resources are invested in the children and communities that need them most, in order to eliminate racial, socio-economic, and other disparities.

We, the Village would like to extend our gratitude to IDEC and the members of the Funding Design workgroup and two funding subcommittees for grappling with this critical and challenging issue. While WTV recognizes the importance of streamlining funding and improving distribution mechanisms to increase equity across our system, our members, especially those running programs and drawing down funding, felt it was important to raise a few key concerns before final recommendations are developed.

First, our provider members do not support eliminating CCAP vouchers at this time and we are glad to hear that the distribution subcommittee is exploring maintaining vouchers in some situations. Providers see a need to improve CCAP funding through prospective and enrollment-based payments, higher reimbursements, and increased eligibility, while also recognizing the benefit of vouchers to help individual families seek care that meets their work and educational needs. This position is aligned with previous provider engagement around funding mechanisms; external feedback from the Funding Mechanisms workgroup of the Funding Commission highlights the same issues. WTV members suggest CCAP vouchers could be kept separate while still reducing administrative burden, noting that Smart Start Workforce Grant and CCAP reporting could potentially be combined and that IDEC could explore using combined data to develop categorical eligibility for workforce grants using CCAP reporting data.

WTV members also shared concerns that eliminating vouchers could negatively impact targeted programs to support the workforce, such as the Child Care for Child Care Educators bill proposed in 2024 and asks that the Workgroup evaluate how these aligned proposals might impact potential future workforce benefit programs,especially in light of cuts to benefits at the federal level.

WTV members also recognize that while a key goal of an aligned system of early childhood funding is to reduce administrative burden, any new system will have a learning curve for both providers and the state around distribution, accounting, and reporting. Some members expressed concern that the initial burden might dissuade small centers and homes from participating in the system and that kinks in initial distribution could threaten child care businesses with small margins. While WTV members agree that an initial administrative burden should not prevent the state from improving our funding system, they do believe that some problems could be avoided with a slower rollout of a new funding system. Members recommended either conducting a small pilot of streamlined funding, as was done with Smart Start Quality Supports, or rolling out the system slowly by service delivery area, as was done with the online CCAP application.

While the ideas shared by WTV are some potential paths forward, the primary recommendation of the coalition is that additional community engagement occurs to highlight the benefits of an aligned system and surface potential problems before significant changes are made in statute. This is aligned with the transparency and equity guidelines we submitted to the TAC, which stress the impotence of effective integration of public input in IDEC decision-making. The coalition is happy to serve as a feedback mechanism for ideas coming out of the funding workgroup and to support recruitment of voices missing from the table to ensure the shared goals of the workgroup and coalition are met. Thank you.