



March 30, 2022

Members of the Senate Committee on Civil Law and Data Practices Policy
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of the Child Welfare and Maltreatment Provisions Modifications, S.F. 1729

Dear Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault is the state organizer, convener, leader, and policy expert regarding sexual violence, including sex trafficking. MNCASA is known and well respected for our policy work in Minnesota and beyond. Informed through frontline experts, our experience with Safe Harbor Protocol teams, and careful review we are writing in support of S.F. 1729.

S.F. 1729 is a bill designed to provide an alternative “third track” Child Protection response to victims of non-familial sex trafficking and their families. Current law requires Child Protective Services to investigate suspected non-familial sex trafficking in the same or similar manner to familial investigations. This causes three major problems. It presents increased risk to CPS workers, who are being asked to work outside the scope of their training and expertise. It also presents concerns for local law enforcement, whose criminal investigations may be derailed by CPS initiating contact with a suspected exploiter. Finally, current law causes child victims and their families to be caught up in the Child Protection system, generally viewed by families as an institution to be feared, rather than one intended to provide support. This further inhibits CPS workers from being able to offer supportive and meaningful services to children and families impacted by sex trafficking.

S.F. 1729 creates an alternative approach that supports CPS’ goal of providing supportive services and ongoing care to victims and their families without the burden and risk of investigating non-familial exploiters. This will benefit not only victims and their families, but law enforcement investigations and subsequent prosecutions. Additionally, S.F. 1729 includes a training provision, which will serve to ensure that CPS workers are able to provide supportive and meaningful services to victims of sex trafficking and their families, improving long-term outcomes and without risking workers’ safety.

As training and technical assistance providers to Safe Harbor protocol development teams, MNCASA works with Child Protection staff, law enforcement, and prosecutors across the state and has seen the need for this alternative option. We thank you for your willingness to consider S.F. 1729, and hope you will consider moving it forward this year.

Sincerely,

Artika Roller
Executive Director, MNCASA

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Public Policy Manager, MNCASA