



MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

March 29, 2022

Chair Jim Abeler
Senate Human Services Reform, Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota Senate

RE: SF 3647: Provisions governing out-of-home placement cost of care, examination and treatment modification

Dear Chair Abeler and the Senate Human Services Reform, Finance and Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) thanks you and Senator Hoffman for the commitment to supporting children and families throughout Minnesota. Addressing and supporting the needs of individuals, children, and families, while preventing the need for an out of home placement and promoting timely reunification of families whenever safe and appropriate, is an area worthy of attention and dedication of resources.

SF 3647 takes an important step in recognizing the families need financial resources in order to support their families – and that having funds diverted away for the payment of placement can jeopardize the long-term health and wellbeing of the family, further jeopardizing the family’s stability, and delaying permanency. MACSSA agrees with the goals of SF 2647 children and families – to not create undue financial barriers for families seeking to reunify with their children. Counties recognize the compelling moral and business justification against seeking reimbursement from families in poverty and in crisis.

Thus, counties support permissive language that allows county staff the flexibility to use discretion when seeking reimbursement for services from an individual or their family. We support language that does not require the lowest income individuals and families to contribute to the cost of their cares – and are open to conversations about an income threshold, as long as that standard does not threaten counties’ ability to draw down federal Title IV-E resources. This would prevent collections from those without appropriate means or for whom this cost becomes a barrier to reunification.

However, counties remain concerned that if this bill is enacted without adequate analysis of the impact on the processes and funding of our Minnesota child wellbeing system, this legislation may decrease resources to our local county child welfare system – further destabilizing a county’s ability to meet and respond to local needs in the area of child wellbeing. Currently, due to limitations of the statewide human services data systems, there is no clear and efficient way to quantify the exact financial impact of this change across the state. Any funding shifted from child wellbeing budgets in counties, however worthy, will further destabilizes a county’s ability to meet local community needs. As counties seek to go upstream and prevent out of home placements in our system, loss of revenue hinders the ability for counties to be transformative in funding community-based prevention models that support individuals, youth and families before child protection involvement is needed.

To address this, MACSSA urges lawmakers to consider the local financial impact of this legislation and consider offsetting that reduction by increasing the baseline amount of the child protection grants. Established in 2016 because of the child protection task force, this grant has not been adjusted to reflect inflation nor real time workforce needs. MACSSA recommends further reviewing this funding mechanism to address the local impact that SF 3647 will have.

Thank you, Senator Hoffman, for your advocacy in this area and for your consultation and consideration of the needs and role of counties in administering the child wellbeing system when developing this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Freeman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Freeman
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

Cc: Senator Hoffman