



March 20, 2023

To Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for SF 1638 - A bill for an act relating to children-- appropriating money for the Quality Parenting Initiative.

Dakota County has been an active member of Quality Parenting Initiative- Minnesota (QPI-MN) since 2020. We believe that consistent, excellent parenting and meaningful relationships are the most important services we can provide to children and youth in foster care, ultimately promoting timely reunification and reducing reentry. Senate File 1638 is a small investment for the state that will yield a significant impact for our children, families, and communities. This proposal ensures the necessary technical assistance will be sustainable and lead to fundamental changes that ultimately promote timely reunification and reduce reentry.

- Through QPI, Dakota County has participated in outreach surveys to our foster families so that we were able to directly hear from them what was needed to better care for the children in their homes. We learned that foster parents are willing to work with birth parents but weren't receiving the support they needed to feel prepared to create the connection.
- Dakota County participates in the initial foster care phone calls under MN Statutes, section 260C.19, subdivision 6. This QPI-MN recommendation for comfort calls became the foundation of the Initial Call Statute that went into effect due to Representative Moran's leadership in 2020. QPI survey data shows that foster parents are significantly more likely to believe they can partner with the birth parent towards reunification when connection is made within the first few days of a child's placement in their care.

We believe that providing funding to SF1638 will impact this training our child welfare system in the following ways:

- Align stakeholders around a culture of developmental research and parenting as primary intervention strategies in child welfare.
- Child welfare professionals and systems understand how coparenting between birth parents and caregivers meet the attachment and developmental needs of young children and adolescents.
- Equip youth and parents with the support, leadership skills and the access to the right practice and policy platforms to make changes in the foster care system.

#### Social Services

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- Create a system feedback loop with those who are impacted by the child welfare system (youth, parents, foster parents) to evaluate whether practice and policies are effectively addressing child and family needs.
- Develop individuals to be change agents for their county or community-based organization.

Thank you for considering the support of SF 1638 - A bill for an act relating to children-- appropriating money for the Quality Parenting Initiative.

*Suzanne Tuttle*

Deputy Director, Social Services



### Social Services

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= Pronoun: Her/Hers

