

Subject: SF1638 - APPROPRIATION; QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee –

Foster Together MN would like to express our support of SF1638 - APPROPRIATION; QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE. We have had an honor of witnessing the impact QPI-MN is having in our community and would love to see them receive this funding to continue moving their mission forward.

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.

Impact of QPI Practices

We had the privilege of hosting some of the youth from QPI-MN for a Youth Voices Panel. Our January 2023 event, “What I Need: Youth Presentation on Fostering”, was highly important and well received by the foster parents and social workers who attended. This collaboration with QPI-MN helped to bring awareness and education from those with lived experience. Attendees reported feeling inspired and informed after the event, which we greatly hope will improve the fostering experience for youth in their care.

Current QPI Practices & Outcomes

Embedded into all QPI practices is leveraging the power of relationships and wisdom of those who have experienced the system firsthand.

- Thirty-six (36) QPI trained Champions who are advocates and work together to disseminate QPI in their local communities.
- 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.
- Youth-led education presentations and materials for foster parents and child welfare professionals with the youth-driven goal that foster homes can become safer, healthier, and a more loving environment.

The impact this training and technical assistance will have on our child welfare system:

- 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 development 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.
- Creation of 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.
- Individuals are developed to be change agents for their county or community-based organization.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter of support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Micayla Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Micayla Johnson
Board President
Foster Together MN
www.fostertogethermn.org