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To: Senate Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:
RE: Letter of Support for **HF1672 - APPROPRIATION; QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE**
Date: March 20, 2023

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. House File 1672 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 for your children and families served

Therapeutic Services Agency (TSA) has been involved in the Child Welfare system in the State of MN for 44 years, having provided Foster Care services for 44 years. In that time we believed in, and directly saw the importance of prioritizing foster parents **and** biological/kin parents as respected partners in care for children whom were involved in the child welfare system. TSA's programming in foster care included a mandatory component that included family therapy and support, with our foster parents working collaboratively with the child's identified family – whether that be biological, kin or other.

When QPI was established in Minnesota, TSA was a champion founder and supporter. We believed in its purpose, that building relationship among caregivers was key in the child's success. We had embraced that approach for 44 years and it was important for us to continue that support in prescriptive steps such as improving caregiver connections through comfort calls and icebreakers. We believed that these immeasurable actions cultivated connection and established seeds for growth in connection, leading to powerful supports in care for children who needed out of home care. QPI provided the positive framework of expectation by targeting the opportunities to always do better for children and families in Minnesota.

QPI minded counties and agencies focus on relationships with intention, and playful support, which have our children and their families at the heart of care by respecting both the needs that are present and by providing the hope and support that inspires positive change.

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.



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- 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 your support of HF1672 - APPROPRIATION; QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE!

Warm regards,

Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW
Executive Director