

March 1, 2024

Senator Steve A. Cwudzinski

Chair, Education Policy Committee

MN Senate Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear members of the Education Policy Committee

We are writing as members of the MN Child Abuse Prevention Coalition. Our coalition represents several agencies committed to child abuse prevention and, in 2023, came together to work together on the critical issue collectively. We believe we are stronger together.

We support SF 3617, a bill that will require physical and sexual abuse prevention and awareness education. Specifically, section 1 (d) refers to the requirement of child physical and sexual abuse prevention instruction in a health curriculum.

We support the requirements that include multi-session, multi-modal, culturally inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and culturally sensitive instruction on identifying emotional and physical child abuse and other forms of personal violence. We look towards the recent [MN Children's Alliance study](#) for guidance on program components critical to success.

Based on research and the collective expertise of our agencies, we are particularly supportive of the additional language that speaks to parent education and a requirement of training and policy implementation around managing disclosures of abuse.

Minnesota's future prosperity requires the healthy development of our children. When we invest upstream in public policies and programs that build strong families and supportive communities, secure the safe, stable, and nurturing environments that all children need.

The cost of child abuse to our communities is staggering. In the immediate term, the costs come from child abuse report investigations, foster care, and medical and mental health treatment. When considering the long-term, child abuse costs stack up due to special education, juvenile and adult crime, chronic health problems, and other costs across the lifespan. We know that effective programs exist to prevent child abuse. We encourage Minnesota to invest in prevention.

The MN Prevention Coalition consists of agencies committed to preventing child abuse. We believe child abuse prevention needs a multidimensional approach that includes the following.

1. Evidence-based education delivered directly to children and families to raise awareness of child abuse (including sexual abuse, internet safety, and physical abuse) and prevention strategies.
2. Awareness campaigns designed to increase community support and engagement for prevention activities and destigmatize asking for help.
3. Promising practices for families that decrease isolation, promote connections to community resources, and reduce familial stress.

4. Through community collaboration and ongoing research, address systems change and the disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color.

While SF3617 refers primarily to evidence-based education delivered to children and families to raise awareness of child abuse and prevention strategies, we also look forward to future larger conversations about the broad base of support needed to prevent child abuse.

Current members of the MN Prevention Coalition include:

- Family Enhancement Center
- Jacob Wetterling Resource Center
- Zero Abuse Project
- CornerHouse
- First Witness
- FamilyWise, home of Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota
- Minnesota Children's Alliance

Again, we thank you for your time and attention to this important bill. Please contact Tracie Clanaugh if you have any questions, 218-727-8353 or [tclanaugh@firstwitness.org](mailto:tclanaugh@firstwitness.org).

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