

May 2, 2024

Chair Liz Olson

House Ways and Means Committee

479 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair John Marty

Senate Finance Committee

3235 Minnesota Senate Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act
(HF912/Agbaje and SF716/Champion)**

Chair Olson and Chair Marty,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage writes in strong support for the African American Family Preservation Act or AAFPA. The 2024 Minnesota Legislature must address real challenges that Black children and families face within the child welfare system. The AAFPA is an important step.

Black children are overrepresented at every stage of child protection services (CPS). Black children are multiple times more likely to be reported to CPS, contacted by CPS, and removed from their families by CPS. This overrepresentation means that Black children and families are disproportionately burdened by the impacts of police surveillance and punitive actions in the child welfare system. Our communities are also impacted by the short-term and long-term harms of child removal and family separation. The data shows that out-of-home placement increases a child's vulnerability to numerous developmental and societal problems¹.

The AAFPA is a critical step for addressing the preceding issues. Its provisions are based on scientific research, and its emphasis on prevention aligns with best practices for protecting children and families². The legislation would benefit African American, African Immigrant, and other children and families impacted by child welfare disproportionality. This is partly why support for its passage has been bipartisan, cross-cultural, and statewide.

¹ On Black overrepresentation in child protection, see data compiled in NAACP Minneapolis's recent [formal complaint](#). Also see this [MN DHS report](#) on 2022 data. For more about the harmful impacts of child welfare disproportionality, see MIT's major studies on the harm of removal: [Child Protection & Child Outcomes](#) (2007); [Child Protection & Adult Crime](#) (2008); [Causal Effects of Foster Care](#) (2013). Also see the [ABA's resource](#) summarizing extensive research in this field. For discussion of the role of poverty in child removal and the importance of prevention in child welfare, see this [systematic review](#) of more than four decades of research and this [synthesis of studies](#) from Boston University.

² The provisions in the AAFPA are based on empirical science and model practices about the benefits of family preservation, heritage and kin networks, and quality social and economic services for child well-being and long-term development. See [Conrad-Hiebner and Bryam 2020](#), [NCCPR October 2022](#), [Epstein 2017](#). In addition to the research literature, Hennepin County and Village Arms report that a pilot project based on AAFPA provisions was successful at improving child well-being in Minnesota by reducing unnecessary child removal.

Our communities need public finance and policy resources that can scale up good practice and science in the child welfare system. Our Council is grateful to Representative Agbaje and Senator Champion for their leadership on the African American Family Preservation Act. We thank the previous committees that have reviewed the bill and moved it forward. We urge the House Ways and Means Committee, Senate Finance Committee, and the Minnesota Legislature to pass HF912/SF716.

Sincerely,

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Theodore Rose | Policy Director | Theo.Rose@state.mn.us

Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule, or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*