



Adult Representation Services

April 4 2024

The Honorable Kari Dziedzic
Chair, State and Local Government and
Veterans Committee
Minnesota Senate
3113 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Bruce D. Anderson
Ranking Minority Member, State and
Local Government and Veterans
Committee, Minnesota Senate
2209 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: In Support of SF5244

Dear Chair Dziedzic, Ranking Member Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

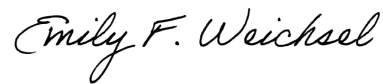
I write in support of SF5244 I am an attorney at Hennepin County Adult Representation Services (“ARS”). ARS is an independent county department that provides advocacy to clients experiencing poverty in civil matters where they are entitled to an attorney, which includes representing persons subject to a Guardianship and Conservatorship.

ARS is the only county-funded law firm in the State of Minnesota that provides exclusive representation for respondents in Guardianship and Conservatorship matters. ARS does not provide representation to petitioners, family members, or third parties involved in adult guardianship matters. We do not represent professional or private guardians. Our interest is singularly to advocate for adequate protections for our clients which safeguard their rights and dignity. As of December 2022, there were over 7,200 open guardianship cases in Hennepin County alone. 2,962 new guardianships were established in Minnesota in 2023.

SF5244 is critical to addressing systemic issues facing persons subject to guardianship. Stakeholders of all perspectives who work in guardianship are in agreement that there are gaps in our current system. The task force is urgently needed to address the concerns of stakeholders from all perspectives, and recommend necessary changes to the guardianship system.

We are strongly in support of this bill. Too many of our clients are subject to unnecessary or overly restrictive guardianships. Those subject to guardianship will benefit from a robust exploration of less restrictive alternatives to guardianship and increased focus on supported decision-making. Those who are in need of a guardian will benefit from improvements to attracting and retaining qualified and quality professional guardians. This task force is a much-needed opportunity for collaboration between guardianship stakeholders and will improve conditions for the over 35,000 Minnesotans currently subject to guardianship. We respectfully request that you support SF5244.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily F. Weichsel".

Emily F. Weichsel
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