



March 3, 2024

Dear Legislators,

The Ain Dah Yung (Our Home) Center supports SF 4480, which expands the protections of the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), enacted in 1978, maintains the best interests of Indian children and preserves their culture and tribal connections. The requirement for establishing guidelines for child custody proceedings involving Indian children ensures their protection from unwarranted removal from their families and communities. Minnesota strengthened these protections in 1985, 2015, and 2023, with the latest iteration incorporating ICWA's protections into Minnesota law when the US Supreme Court case *Brackeen v. Haaland* threatened to dismantle these protections at the federal level.

The Ain Dah Yung Center provides a healing place within the community for American Indian youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness. We work with families who have been negatively impacted by federal policies, boarding schools, and the unjustifiable removals from their communities and cultures. But we also see firsthand how, when complied with, ICWA and MIFPA benefit our families. Adhering to these laws can help families heal from the impacts of historical trauma, build protective factors against future trauma and hardships, create support systems, and build connections to community.

Throughout the drafting process the MIFPA Workgroup engaged with various stakeholders, including representatives from Tribal Nations, the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and community partners. Some of the highlights include clarifying the petitioner's responsibility for providing active efforts, the process for an inquiry of the child's tribal lineage, and notice requirements to parents and Tribes. We have no doubt that these amendments will benefit Indian families throughout the state.

We ask that you vote in favor of SF 4480 during this legislative session. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of support.

Sincerely,

Sheri Riemers

Sheri Riemers, Executive Director
Ain Dah Yung (Our Home) Center