



IMMIGRANT DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Uniting Dreams, Building Communities

Immigrant Development Center
810 4th Avenue South, Suite 100
Moorhead, MN 56560

To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Chair Melissa Wiklund and committee members,

My name is Fowzia Adde and I am the Executive Director of the Immigrant Development Center, a nonprofit serving East African and West African immigrant communities in Moorhead, Minnesota. I am writing to urge your strong support for the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/SF716).

As an advocate working directly with African immigrant families navigating the child welfare system, I see firsthand how cultural and language barriers lead to the unnecessary removal of children from loving homes at alarming rates. African immigrant parents are not more likely to abuse or neglect their children. Yet time and again, I witness how misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences result in the traumatic separation of families.

One recent case exemplifies this tragic pattern. James, a Nigerian father, was arrested and charged with felony domestic violence for disciplining his 11-year-old daughter after she engaged in inappropriate behavior at school. The school had complained about bullying and the mother told James to "beat her and discipline her." James resorted to physical discipline, a practice accepted in his culture, out of desperation to correct his daughter's behavior. Neighbors misunderstood his actions and called the police. Now James faces prison, and his daughter faces foster care - though she was never in danger.

This heartbreaking situation illustrates how child protection's cultural incompetence is shattering immigrant families. With no understanding of African disciplinary norms, a father's attempt to parent is criminalized. With no support to overcome language barriers, an immigrant family cannot advocate for itself against a system stacked against them.

The provisions of the African American Family Preservation Act would protect families like James' by:

- Requiring active efforts to provide culturally-appropriate services to prevent out-of-home placement
- Incorporating economic supports into safety plans to mitigate poverty-related neglect
- Empowering the reestablishment of parental rights when in the child's best interest
- Establishing oversight to address systemic issues leading to disproportionality for African American and African immigrant children



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On behalf of the East African and West African communities I serve, I implore you to pass this critical legislation. The arbitrary removal of African children from their homes is a devastating form of modern oppression that we have a moral obligation to stop. By supporting families, we can end the punitive practices disproportionately harming communities of color.

The true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable. Let us live up to our values by reforming our child welfare system to keep African American and African immigrant children safe with their families, where they have the best opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your service and your support,

Fowzia Adde
Executive Director
Immigrant Development Center