



Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota (SLCM)

5701 Shingle Creek Parkway, Suite 275, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

P. O. Box 28057, Oakdale, St. Paul, MN 55128 – www.slcmn.org

To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chair Melissa Wiklund and Committee Members,

I am reaching out to request your support of the **Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/SF716)**, authored by Senator Champion and Rep Agbaje.

Child welfare disproportionality is a long standing, egregious and well-documented issue that continues to plague the state of Minnesota. African American children are removed from their homes, families, and communities at alarming rates. A large majority are moving from child protection to juvenile detention (foster care to prison pipeline). In addition, the overall statistical outcomes for foster youth are troubling. The likelihood of justice system involvement increases as related to the number of placements a youth has experienced. The risks of substance use, housing insecurity, lack of education, generational problems, and sex trafficking are significantly higher for young people that have been in foster care than their counterparts that did not experience out-of-home placement.

Research shows us that children fare better both in the short and long term when they are provided economic and safety services within their own families. We have an obligation to ensure a child's well-being by preserving their familial connections. We urge you to support this bill and keep families safely together.

The MN African American Family Preservation Act would serve to:

- **Protect children and strengthen families**
- **Reduce the cost of child welfare services and out of home placement**
- **Reduce law enforcement and judicial systems costs for intervention**
- **Improve the mental health and social functioning for African American children**
- **Improve the child protection department efficacy**

The cost of removal to the state is exponentially higher than it would be to temporarily provide in-home support to a NON-ABUSIVE family that may be facing hardships related to poverty. Minnesota pays upwards of 25k per child to place the child in foster care while family preservation and in home services costs under 5k.

The perpetual clogging of our child protection system with children that are not at risk of harm has helped to exhaust county and state resources. This has led to case worker overload, a significant decrease in foster home availability and a nonsensical increase in state spending while leaving children truly in need of protection, vulnerable and at risk.

Everyone has a stake in ensuring our child protection system is fair and equitable. As your constituent, it is my hope that the issues this bill seeks to address are a high concern. Thank you in advance for your time, service, and support of this bill!

Respectfully,
Karifa Jalloh

Executive Director, Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota

Phone: 612 251-7134. Email: director@slcmn.org