



April 17, 2024

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

As an organization committed to the well-being and empowerment of families for fifty years, Families Rising is writing to express our thanks for the inclusion of the The African American Family Preservation Act in your budget bill.

At Families Rising, our mission is to amplify those with lived experience, assist adoptive, foster, and kinship parents, educate child welfare professionals, and champion the well-being of children and families. We firmly believe that The African American Family Preservation Act aligns with our mission and represents a crucial step towards rectifying long-standing disparities and biases within the child welfare system.

For far too long, the practices of the Minnesota child welfare system have inflicted disproportionate harm on Black families. Shockingly, Black children are twice as likely to be removed from their homes compared to their white counterparts despite constituting only 17% of investigations and 11% of the overall child population. Under the guise of child protection, these practices have perpetuated cycles of racism, poverty, abuse, and discrimination, leading to the decimation of Black communities and families.

It is imperative that we address these systemic injustices. Federal funding should never be utilized as a tool of discrimination. Yet, Minnesota receives substantial amounts of money from the federal government annually to support a system that disproportionately impacts Black families and communities.

The African American Family Preservation Act represents a crucial step towards rectifying these long-standing disparities and biases within the child welfare system. Here are several compelling reasons why we endorse this act:

**Addressing systemic racism:** The act acknowledges the historical and ongoing impact of systemic racism on African American families and seeks to reform policies and practices contributing to their overrepresentation in the child welfare system.

Promoting family preservation: Emphasizing the importance of keeping families together whenever possible, the act provides culturally appropriate services and support, aligning with the principle of prioritizing family preservation over unnecessary removals.

Improving outcomes: Research demonstrates that children who can remain with their families when safe tend to have better long-term outcomes compared to those placed in foster care. The act aims to improve outcomes for African American children by keeping more families intact.

Reducing disparities: African American children are significantly overrepresented in the child welfare system compared to their population. The act aims to reduce these disparities by addressing underlying factors contributing to disproportionate removals.

Cultural competency: The act calls for cultural competency training and the involvement of the African American community in decision-making processes. It promotes more culturally appropriate interventions and better engagement with families.

By including The African American Family Preservation Act in the budget bill, your committee is playing a pivotal role in addressing systemic inequities, promoting family unity, and improving outcomes for African American children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Sincerely,

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