



Association of
Minnesota Counties



MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

March 14, 2024

Senator Wiklund, Chair
Health and Human Services
95 University Ave W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2107
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF 716 – Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (MAAFPA)

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) thank Senator Champion for authoring SF 716, the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (MAAFPA) and are supportive of the goal of the MAAFPA to protect the best interests of African American children.

We value the tireless work of Senator Champion, advocates and the many others involved, to address inequities in Minnesota's child welfare system that have led to over representation of African Americans in the system. Counties recognize the urgency around addressing racial disparities in the child welfare system. Fundamentally, we believe all children have the right to be safe and protected from maltreatment, abuse and neglect.

The child protection system is one of the most complex social systems in our society, governed by both federal and state policy, involving a myriad of partners including law enforcement, judges, attorneys, child welfare workers and community partners. As an important step, MACSSA strongly encourages a review of the child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) court processes and corresponding changes that are fundamental to reducing the systems' disproportionate impact on African American children and families. Counties stress the importance of education and training and are very supportive of efforts that assist mandate reporters in lessening reports related to poverty and other conditions of the family that are not parental risk factors.

In times of program scarcity, increased mental health and substance use needs, workforce shortages and woefully inadequate information systems it is critical to make data informed investments that are culturally responsive and family centered while also fostering more partnership, establishing upstream services, and coordinating between systems. AMC and MACSSA will support efforts that invest in and develop a continuum of culturally responsive community-based programs with the goal of supporting African American families without the use of out of home placement. We strongly support developing increased capacity in the child welfare system to deliver more intensive home-based services and wrap around services, while working to meet additional family needs. We encourage lawmakers to pay attention to workforce shortages and impact, including provider reimbursement rates - all critical components to ensure that programs and services are sustainable.

As legislators take important steps to address racial disparities in the child welfare system, we strongly encourage utilizing data to inform decision making – and investments in the areas of training, education, processes, programs, services and system technologies to correspond with any policy changes. We implore legislators to ensure investments are made available throughout each of Minnesota's 87 counties and are funded in an equitable and sustainable manner, with the state as a partner in ensuring program availability.

Sincerely,

Angie Thies, Child Wellbeing Policy Analyst - Association of Minnesota Counties

Cc: Senator Champion, President of the Minnesota Senate