



Institute to
Transform
Child Protection

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The Honorable Sen. Melissa H. Wiklund
Minnesota Senate
Chairperson, Health and Human Services Committee
503 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: African American Family Preservation Act

Chair Sen. Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Mitchell Hamline School of Law Institute to Transform Child Protection, we write in support of SF716. The African American Family Preservation Act (AAFPA) would promote the stability and wellbeing of African American families in Minnesota by preventing unnecessary removal of African American children and other children of color from their families.

As advocates for families in court and through legislative reform, we at the Institute to Transform Child Protection understand that it is critical that children in Minnesota have family and relationship stability, in particular children of color who are more often impacted by the trauma of child protection involvement. African American children and other children of color are removed from their families in child protection cases at alarmingly disparate rates compared to white children. This disproportionately high rate of removal does not allow for African American and other children of color to foster their familial, community, and cultural ties, and it creates a sense of distrust between the child protection system and those communities.

In our experience representing parents and family members going through the child protection system, we have heard numerous firsthand accounts from African American clients regarding adverse experiences with, and removal resulting from, child protection involvement. We have also encountered numerous relatives of African American children being unable to provide relative care due to barriers to foster care provider licensure. We have seen a system in which African American children are disproportionately removed from their immediate families and their extended relatives face disproportionate barriers to providing them interim care.

We ask that members of the committee vote in favor of SF716.

Sincerely,

Institute to Transform Child Protection

Mitchell Hamline School of Law Child Protection Clinic