



National Association of Social Workers

MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Health and Human Services
March 15, 2024

Chair Wiklund and Health and Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN), we are writing in support of SF0716, the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act.

NASW-MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing about 2000 social workers. Our members work in a wide variety of settings, including direct practice (clinical and non-clinical) and macro practice. While the populations served by social workers vary greatly, many are impacted by children and families interacting with the child protection system.

The Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act aligns with NASW-MN's priorities to support every child growing up in a nurturing and safe environment. We recognize the disproportionate presence of African American children and families in the child protection system, and the long-term harm it causes when we focus on separation and punishment. Instead, we advocate for trauma-responsive policies that foster participation, restoration, safety, and resilience.

We believe that transforming current practices is necessary to prevent harm within families and the recurrent trauma in foster care. Therefore, we support the diligence and oversight that this bill specifies. If children cannot remain with their parents, we want to ensure every effort is made to locate other family members or kin. We also appreciate establishing a case review system and gathering data so we can be more specific in our reforms and intentional in our response to families who need support. Finally, as licensed social workers who are required to maintain current best practice through continuing education, we understand the importance of specific training for staff working with African American families.

Though daunting, SF0716 provides an important roadmap toward transformational change in our child protection system. We appreciate your service and work on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Goodenough, PhD, LGSW
Executive Director
NASW-MN

Jenny Arneson, MSW, LGSW
Legislative Consultant
NASW-MN