

February 17, 2025

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

My name is Missy Neumeyer, I live in Duluth, Minnesota and I am writing today in support of S.F. 446, a bill that would open Respite options for children and families across the state.

My family was able to access out-of-home respite on a regular basis up until the time DHS changed the requirement for children's out-of-home respite to having to be offered in a licensed setting. This provided my family with a much-needed break from caring for a child with complex behavioral needs. My kid's father was sick with cancer, and I was caring for him as well as two teenagers on the autism spectrum.

The licensed setting requirement resulted in the loss of the out-of-home respite option for our family. It is probably hard for you to imagine how the loss of the respite break impacts our family. For me, it has meant none of us got breaks from the stress of having cancer destroying their dad. We had lots of extremely painful and sad events to process as their father died, and I took care of it all. Without breaks, I broke down shortly after their father died, and couldn't manage the kids grief well or their behaviors, and that meant more family loss, as my daughter was taken from me by Child Protection Services.

For the past 2 years, I've been trying to be a family even though we've been forced apart. Having respite back means my daughter could possibly have weekends home with me while her brother is at respite, and both can learn valuable social and independence skills during respite.

I urge you to support Senate File 446, and open respite options for families like mine. It is the most important thing you can do to help us keep our children in their home.

Thank You,

Melissa Neumeyer