

February 20, 2025

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

RE: SF 942

Dear Senator Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) thank Senator Kunesh for authoring SF 942 and would like to convey our strong support for the legislation.

In Minnesota, addressing concerns in educational neglect or habitually truant individuals currently falls under the purview of child protection. Approaching educational concerns in this way often pulls families into the deepest end of our service continuum.

SF 942 allows for a child welfare response, while preserving the option of a child protection response where situations necessitate it. A child welfare response allows for staff to provide early intervention services, often in conjunction and in partnership with community-based organization. Counties contend that a child welfare response is a more appropriate response that can also serve to address the racial and socio-economic disproportionality that exists within Minnesota's child protection system. This disproportionality is especially present in educational neglect reports.

Notably, understanding the underlying challenges that lead to school absenteeism/truancy takes time, relationship and establishing trust with the family. Not surprisingly, families are often frightened of the child protective system, which can impact the ability to discover the root causes that are contributing to school absences. Counties have routinely found that working in partnership with Community and Family Resource Centers and other community-based organizations to support families results in better outcomes, with lasting linkages and social connections to broader community networks, an identified protective factor by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

The AMC and MACSSA strongly support SF 942 and encourage members of this committee to do the same.

Sincerely,



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

Cc:
Senator Kunesh