



March 5, 2025

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Service Committee,
I am writing to you today to ask for your support for SF1786.

Ampersand Families mission is to provide permanency and adoption services to older youth and families who face barriers to equity in child welfare, and to champion systemic changes that advance belonging, dignity, and hope. One of the many services we provide, is licensure of families for the purpose of adoption from Minnesota's child welfare system. Historically, we have worked to license both non-relative and relative/kin families. Over the past couple of years our work with relative/kin families has continued to grow and far exceeds our work with non-relative families, similar to trends throughout Minnesota.

We see this as positive trend and believe that when possible, youth involved in the child welfare system do better when they can remain connected to relatives, kin, and culture—this is supported by research as well.

To do this work well, we work alongside families to address their unique needs. When doing this work it is often clear to us that the foster care system was designed for working with non-relatives. As a result, this system often creates barriers, and therefore delays, in our work to get relative/kin families licensed. The changes that would need to happen as a result of SF1786 will make our work with families more efficient, resulting in caregivers being able to focus on caring for their relative/kin children, rather than the daunting and complex realities of the current licensure process, and overall this would result in better outcomes for youth.

Therefore, we support changes, including a standard for licensing and support specifically designed for relatives, that will help us do our work with relative families more effectively and efficiently.

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We appreciate the flexibility that SF1786 would provide when licensing families and ask that you support this bill.

We thank you for your consideration of SF1786.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CKZ" followed by a stylized surname.

Christina Zeise
Executive Director, Ampersand Families

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