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

I am the Licensing Supervisor at Family Alternatives, a non-profit child foster care agency. Our agency assesses and licenses child foster care providers and supervises and supports their care of young people, including those caring for their relatives and kin. I am writing in support of SF 1786.

Family Alternatives believes strongly in Minnesota's priority for relative/kinship care for young people in need of out of home placement. Not only does placement with family-kin support the young person's identity and retention of culture, but studies have shown this provides more positive educational and health outcomes and fewer traumatic moves.

Family Alternatives work with relatives-kin has increased substantially in the past several years. We are committed to supporting these applicants, so children live with family when possible. Family Alternatives provides a high level of in person licensing support as well as needed financial support to most relative-kin applicants during the licensing process, without compensation until the license is open. Adjustments leading to relative-kin licenses opening more efficiently would allow us to continue providing these supports.

Relative-kin applicants face barriers to licensing, and a kinship standard for licensing and support is essential to providing them with timely access to support. Often the applicant is providing care to relative-kin young people concurrent with completing the licensing process. This alone affects the time available to work on requirements.

I strongly support the components of the bill regarding educational requirements, access to information and resources, funding for childcare and material needs, modification of background study requirements, and adjustment to the home study assessment for relatives-kin.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Best regards,

Barbara Schultz

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