



March 5, 2024

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

I am writing to express my strong support for SF1786 Kinship Licensing & Support. Quality Parenting Initiative-Minnesota is an advocacy strategy to strengthen our foster care system. QPI directs practices and policies towards loving, developmentally informed parenting. Over the past few years, we have been intentional on recognizing the role of relative/kinship families and understanding how to better support them.

We have learned that building the licensing process to meet the unique needs of relatives is necessary. In the Fall of 2024, QPI-MN utilized its resources of data collection to gather information from county and community-based foster care licensors regarding licensing barriers. This feedback reinforced that relatives caring for children can be overwhelmed with their responsibilities, which leads to delays in completing licensing requirements. Additional barriers faced include limited free time, difficulty with paperwork, lack of access to technology, and mistrust of the system. Investing in the licensing and family support required to adequately meet the needs of relative-kin caregivers is a must, and achievable.

QPI leverages the power of relationships and the wisdom of those who have experienced the foster care system firsthand. QPI-MN has directly gathered feedback from relatives and kinship families. In our survey on early placement in 2024, greater satisfaction was reported by relatives in the early days of a relative child being in their home when these three actions occurred: 1) Caseworker spent time understanding the current relationship with the child's parents, 2) Received information on foster care licensing process next steps, 3) Caseworker asked about their needs to provide care for the child.

We know the important role that communication has for parenting. In 2024, 81% of relative/kin families who participate in our Quality Parenting Outreach (QPO) survey said the initial call/contact was helpful for them to care for their relative child. In 2025, we just completed this same survey and saw an increase to 88% of relative/kin caregivers felt this was helpful.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I urge you to lend your support to SF1786 Kinship Licensing & Support. I remain hopeful for positive action in support of the unique needs, and beautiful role, of kinship and relative families in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Rickord, MA, LP, SEP".

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