



*Guiding youth down the road to living independently.*

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

As a foster youth serving agency dedicated to supporting foster families and ensuring the well-being of foster youth, I am writing to express our strong support for SF1547 for funding for the Minnesota Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY). Specifically, we urge the allocation of resources for the addition of full-time employees dedicated to outreach efforts targeting foster youth.

The work of OOFY is vital in amplifying the voices of foster youth and addressing the unique challenges they face within the foster care system. However, meaningful outreach efforts require dedicated personnel who can actively engage with foster youth, build trust, and ensure their voices are heard. By funding additional staff, the office would be better equipped to connect with foster youth across Minnesota, assess their needs, and advocate for solutions that promote their well-being and success.

From our perspective as a foster youth serving agency, we recognize the essential role that outreach plays in bridging the gap between foster youth and the resources available to them. Foster families often rely on the insights and feedback of the youth themselves to improve care, and enhanced outreach would directly empower foster youth to share their experiences and needs. This funding would not only strengthen the relationship between foster youth and their families but also contribute to the development of more effective policies and practices within the foster care system.

We believe this investment in OOFY's outreach efforts aligns with Minnesota's commitment to equity and opportunity for all children. Supporting foster youth through this initiative is not just an ethical imperative but also a practical step toward ensuring their growth and potential are nurtured.

Thank you for supporting SF1547, and please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide further information or insights from our work.

In service,

Jessica Rogers