



AIFACS

AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

March 19th, 2025

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

I am writing in support of SF1548, which would increase the Northstar Care for Children benefit from 50% to 100% of the basic rate for foster children under the age of six who reach permanency with relatives or within the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) placement preferences.

American Indian Family and Children's Services is an Indigenous private agency with a mission to develop and support foster homes in providing compassionate, stable, secure, and culturally competent care for American Indian children and families.

Many of the families that we work with at AIFACS are Indigenous relative/kin caregivers, whose involvement in child welfare and the foster care system is charged with historical trauma. This bill would mitigate the perpetuated trauma of working with the child welfare system by ensuring timely permanency for foster youth in relative care without anxiety about undue financial burden.

This 50% alternate rate has created a barrier for relative caregivers and lengthens the time to permanency for foster children. Establishing permanency and financial stability for foster youth and children are vital to their wellbeing and growth.

Additionally, families, foster care agencies, and county social services are delaying finalization of permanency until after the child turns six to ensure that relative caregivers receive the full financial rate and can care for their children long term. This takes direct services and resources away from other families involved in the child welfare system.

This modification to Northstar Care for Children ensures that foster children can grow up in supportive, stable homes with relatives. Organization Name strongly supports these changes and urges the members of the committee to support the passage of SF1548.

Sincerely,

Samantha Thompson, MSW LGSW | Foster Care Licensing Worker

American Indian Family and Children's Services