

February 25, 2025

Dear Lawmakers,



Ampersand Families strongly supports the modification to Northstar Care for Children for foster children under the age of six who reach permanency with relatives or within the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) placement preferences.

Ampersand Families was formed in 2008 to help olde youth and teens in foster care join safe, loving, permanent families through adoption. Over time, our work as evolved to prioritize family preservation and relative/kin connections whenever possible.

When children six and older in the Northstar Care for Children program reach permanency they continue to receive the same financial benefits they received while in foster care. For children under the age of six this benefit decreases by 50%. This lack of financial support negatively impacts younger children and their families, especially low-income relatives that have important resources and connections that are in the child's best interests but may not have the financial resources to care for them long-term.

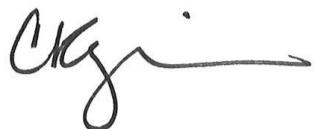
Increased financial benefits are essential for Fosters to maintain stability with their relative care providers. Fosters with greater financial support are less likely to have permanency delayed, be moved to non-relative homes outside of their communities, or reengage with the child welfare system.

In 2023, approximately 45% of the 490 children waiting for adoption were siblings who needed to be adopted together (DHS-4746-ENG 11-24: Adoption: Finding families for Minnesota's waiting children). Sibling connections are often people's longest relationships in life and are a protective factor for Fosters. Equalizing Northstar Care for Children benefits children who reach permanency with relatives and will ensure relatives are financially supported in caring for sibling groups and keeping them together.

ampersand families provides adoption and permanency services to older youth and families who face barriers to equity in child welfare, and champions systemic changes that advance belonging, dignity, and hope.

This modification to Northstar Care for Children ensures that Fosters have the opportunity to grow up in supportive, stable homes and maintain connections to their families and communities. Thank you for supporting this legislation and your continuing efforts to improve the experiences of Fosters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CKZ".

Christina Zeise
Executive Director, Ampersand Families

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