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March 18<sup>th</sup>, 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.

As a private, child foster care licensing that actively supports kinship families working to care permanently for their relatives, we know firsthand what a difference this rate change would make.

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. Family Alternatives strongly supports these changes and urges the members of the committee to support the passage of SF1548.

Sincerely,

*Mary Lennick*

Mary Lennick, LICSW  
Executive Director  
Family Alternatives