

March 19, 2025

Dear Legislative Committee Members:

I write to support SF1548, being heard in your committee this week. This bill will help children and families who need additional financial support in Minnesota, including those directly impacted by the child welfare system.

Northstar Care for Children is a financial benefit for children placed in foster care, children whose custody has been transferred to a relative/kin, and children who are adopted. Northstar improves permanency for children by increasing the number of children who transition from foster care into a permanent family. It also provides ongoing stable benefits to children based on the level of care needed to support the child's needs and strengths.

Children who reach permanency while under age 6 receive the Pre-School Entry Alternate Rate, which is approximately half the financial benefits that children over age 6 receive. This alternate rate negatively impacts children under the age of 6 since caregivers will receive a reduced rate and might not have the financial support to care for the children long-term. The reduced rate is approximately 50% of what caregivers receive in foster care payment.

An issue that often occurs is that the child is in a permanency placement and the caregivers have indicated that they are not able to provide for the child with a 50% reduction in the current foster care funds. Then county agencies are faced with two options: move the child, which is not in the child's best interests, or continue to delay permanency

This bill will increase the monthly Northstar Care for Children financial benefit from 50% to 100% of the basic rate for children under the age of 6 who reach permanency with a relative or are placed within the Indian Child Welfare Act/Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act placement preferences. It provides a mechanism for fair treatment and additional funds to children and families who need support.

Sincerely,

Joanna Woolman

Executive Director, Keeping Families Connected Minnesota