



161 Rondo Avenue, Suite 919  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55113

January 10, 2025

Dear Senator Kunesh and Representative Hicks,

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) is writing this letter in support of the modification to the Northstar Care for Children Pre-School Entry Rate. The mission of the MIAC is to protect the sovereignty of the eleven Tribal Nations that share geography with Minnesota and ensure the wellbeing of all American Indians throughout the state. MIAC is the official liaison between state and tribal government and its executive board consists of the elected tribal leaders of the sovereign tribal governments. There is no resource more vital to Tribes' continued existence and integrity than our children.

Northstar Care for Children is a financial benefit for children placed in foster care whose custody has been transferred to a relative or kin, and children who are adopted. When children six and older reach permanency they continue to receive the same financial benefits, they received while in foster care but benefits for children under the age of six decrease by 50%. This lower rate negatively impacts relatives and kin of younger children who may not have the financial means to care for them long-term, even though they could provide a loving and stable home. This lack of financial support for relative care providers means that children are more likely to be moved to non-relative homes outside of their communities, have future interactions with the child welfare system, or have permanency delayed. When American Indian children lose connections to their families and Tribal communities, we lose our most precious resource and our future – our children.

We understand that it is critical that children in Minnesota have family and relationship stability. This is particularly important in cases involving American Indian children who are significantly impacted by the trauma of child protection involvement. As of 2022, American Indian children are sixteen times more likely than white children to be in out-of-home care. This disproportionately high rate does not allow for American Indian children to foster their familial, community, and cultural ties. When children are unable to reunify with their parents they should remain with family and within their community. Lack of financial resources should not be a barrier for a child to reach permanency with a relative.

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



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The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council strongly endorses the modification to the Northstar Care for Children that ensures children have the opportunity to grow up in supportive and stable homes and maintain connections to their Tribal communities and practices.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this critical matter.

Respectfully,

A blue ink signature of Robert L. Larsen, consisting of a stylized 'R' followed by a horizontal line.

President Robert L. Larsen  
Lower Sioux Indian Community  
Board Chairman  
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

A blue ink signature of Shannon Geshick, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line.

Shannon Geshick  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council