

March 18, 2025

**Re: Support for SF1548**

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for SF1548, a critical measure to ensure that Minnesota fulfills its promise to children in foster care. MSSA is made up of over 5,000 health and human service (HHS) professionals statewide. Our members cover the health and human service spectrum—child welfare providers, mental health providers, social workers, case managers, etc.—and are employed by for-profit and nonprofit entities, as well as state and local government agencies.

SF1548 corrects an unjust gap in Northstar Care for Children by ensuring that young children under age six who reach permanency with relatives or within Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) placement preferences continue to receive the same level of financial support they had while in foster care. Currently, children aged six and older receive full benefits after adoption or transfer of custody, but benefits for younger children are cut in half. This policy does not reflect the realities of caregiving or child development—raising a child does not cost half as much simply because they are younger.

Caregivers who step up for young relatives often face significant financial burdens. Childcare, specialized services, and the additional support needed to help children heal from trauma place considerable strain on families—particularly for those who never expected to take on a parenting role. Some caregivers don't realize until it's too late that their child's benefits will be reduced, leaving them struggling to provide the stable, loving home they intended. Others delay finalization until a child turns six to maintain full benefits, unnecessarily prolonging their time in foster care. In the worst cases, the lack of financial support forces families into impossible decisions, leading to disrupted placements or reentry into the child welfare system.

In 2023, 45% of children waiting for adoption in Minnesota were part of sibling groups. This legislation will help families keep siblings together by removing financial barriers that force difficult choices. Ensuring equal financial support, regardless of age, will strengthen family and community connections and provide children with the stability they need to thrive.

Passing SF1548 is a commitment to the well-being of Minnesota's children. It is a practical, necessary, and just step to support caregivers, prevent unnecessary disruptions, and ensure that all children—regardless of age—receive the support they need. Thank you for your leadership and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns at [msancartier@mnssa.org](mailto:msancartier@mnssa.org).

Sincerely,

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Minnesota Social Service Association

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