



March 17, 2024

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

I am writing to express my strong support for 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.

Aligned with the principles of the Quality Parenting Initiative-Minnesota (QPI-MN), this legislation reinforces our shared commitment to ensuring every child experiences loving, stable parenting. QPI-MN emphasizes that strengthening foster care is not just about placing children in homes but fostering environments where they can thrive and grow. The current 50% alternate rate inadvertently creates barriers for relative caregivers, delaying permanency and undermining the stability and well-being of children.

By addressing this disparity, SF1548 would directly promote the financial and emotional stability that foster children need for healthy development. Relative caregivers play a vital role in offering safe and nurturing homes, yet the financial strain under the current system often forces families, foster care agencies, and county social services to postpone finalization of permanency until a child turns six, solely to ensure that caregivers receive the full financial rate. This practice not only delays permanency but also diverts critical services and resources from other families navigating the child welfare system.

This modification to Northstar Care for Children ensures that foster children can grow up in supportive, stable homes when they are not able to remain in legal permanence with their parents. SF1548 represents a crucial step towards establishing lasting stability for foster children while removing financial barriers for relative caregivers or MIFPA placement preferences.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I urge you to lend your support to SF1548.

Sincerely,

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Ensuring excellent, developmentally informed parenting in the child welfare system.