

March 19, 2025

Re: Support for SF1898

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

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for SF1898, a critical measure to ensure that Minnesota takes meaningful steps toward improving its child welfare system. On behalf of the Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA), which represents over 5,000 health and human service (HHS) professionals statewide—including child welfare providers, mental health providers, social workers, and case managers—we urge you to advance this important legislation.

Minnesota's child protection system is complex, fragmented, and in need of a more equitable and effective funding approach. SF1898 directs the Commissioner of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to conduct a comprehensive fiscal analysis, program, and practice evaluation of the child welfare system, ensuring that every available funding source is identified and equitably distributed across the state. The funding mechanisms that support child welfare services are intricate, and counties bear a significant financial burden. In fact, Minnesota ranks in the bottom ten states for state investments in child welfare. A thorough review of our financial infrastructure is long overdue and will help maximize resources while ensuring that children and families receive the support they need.

Currently, Minnesota may not be fully utilizing all available federal funding opportunities. The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) is one such example—despite being enacted over six years ago, Minnesota has yet to fully leverage Title IV-E prevention funding due to administrative and claiming challenges. This bill provides a much-needed road map to analyze and restructure our funding approach, build capacity for preventative services, and ensure funds are allocated in ways that support families before they enter the child welfare system. SF1898 is also the result of extensive stakeholder engagement, and this broad collaboration reflects the urgency and importance of this legislation.

This legislation is more than just a fiscal analysis; it is a commitment to the thousands of children and families impacted by Minnesota's child welfare system. By supporting SF1898, we can take meaningful steps toward an improved, more equitable, and more effective system that prioritizes prevention, maximizes available funding, and provides children and families with the services they need no matter where they live.

We strongly urge you to support SF1898 and prioritize its passage in your committee. Thank you for your leadership and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns at msancartier@mnssa.org.

Sincerely,

Michelle SanCartier
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