

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 31, 2025

Senator Wiklund  
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services  
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

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

I am writing to express my strong support for SF 1691, which allocates funds to the Birth Justice Collaborative to strengthen and implement the African American-focused Homeplace model in Hennepin County, a vital initiative aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes.

The Homeplace model delivers essential care and plays a crucial role in addressing racial disparities in maternal and infant health. This model is specifically designed to offer critical care for expecting mothers and support the entire family system throughout the pregnancy experience. It includes programs that engage partners, grandparents, and other family members, ensuring that everyone receives the education, emotional support, and resources necessary for a healthy pregnancy and birth.

Supporting the entire family system is essential, as a collaborative approach strengthens family bonds and creates a nurturing environment for both mother and child. Addressing the broader needs of the family alleviates stress and enhances resilience, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes. This holistic care model will help bridge the gap in maternal health disparities and set a precedent for similar programs throughout the state.

This investment has the potential to create meaningful, lasting change by enhancing access to culturally competent care, fostering better health outcomes, and establishing a precedent for similar programs statewide. I would urge your support for SF 1691 to ensure that Black and African American families in Hennepin County receive the care and support they deserve.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Irene Fernando". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Irene" and last name "Fernando" clearly legible.

Irene Fernando