



March 24, 2025

Re: SF2597 | Special Revenue Fund for Foster Grants

Dear Chair Fateh and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

The Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) strongly supports the creation of a special revenue fund for the Fostering Independence Grants.

OOFY opened in May 2024 through the advocacy of Minnesotans with experience in foster care. We are a fully independent state agency, separate from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and the Department of Human Services. OOFY hears concerns from anyone, prioritizing concerns from children and youth in foster care about their rights, care, safety, and placement. Four of our six staff have personal experience in foster care.

The Fostering Independence Grants (FIG) play a critical role in helping foster youth overcome barriers in accessing higher education and beyond. These grants not only help cover tuition and fees but also support foster youth in maintaining housing, food security, and other essential needs. For many, FIG is the difference between choosing to enroll in school or taking a different, often not preferred path. FIG creates an opportunity to have an educational experience that is similar to their peers', connection to a supportive community, and a network of resources, possibly for the first time.

We appreciate your attention and response during last legislative session, when FIG faced a significant shortfall due to an overwhelming number of Fosters taking advantage of the opportunity to pursue their educational dreams. This shortfall, while indicative of increased demand, underscores the necessity of ensuring that FIG is fully and adequately funded. Our office supports the passage of SF2597 to ensure these grants are properly and reliably funded moving forward. Sincerely,

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