

Testimony: Amina Adan – Educator and Community Leader

To the Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Amina Adan, and I come before you as an educator, community leader, and a strong advocate for children and families in Minnesota. In my work, I have had the honor of witnessing the incredible resilience and determination of parents as they navigate the challenges of raising children, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and related conditions. Services like Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention (EIDBI) have been transformative for many families, and I am here to highlight their importance while urging continued improvement in their structure and accessibility.

As a community leader, I see the positive impact these services have had. Parents are empowered when they see their children making developmental strides. They feel reassured knowing that resources exist to help them navigate their child's unique needs. However, I also see the challenges—cultural barriers, lack of awareness about available support, and hesitancy to seek help due to fear of stigma or misunderstanding. We need more culturally responsive and inclusive practices that welcome all families into these vital systems of care.

The recommendations outlined in the 2025 EIDBI Licensing Report are a step in the right direction. Establishing health and safety standards, improving training requirements, and ensuring robust oversight are essential for protecting vulnerable children. However, as with any systemic overhaul, we must address shortcomings with compassion and collaboration. Licensing should not merely be a mechanism of enforcement but a tool for empowerment—providing coaching, guidance, and resources to providers so they can serve families effectively.

Mistakes happen. Human error, lack of knowledge, or systemic inefficiencies can lead to gaps in care. As an educator, I know the power of learning and growth. We must extend this mindset to EIDBI providers, equipping them with the skills, cultural competence, and tools they need to succeed. A supportive approach—one that includes clear guidelines, accessible training, and in-person coaching—will ensure that providers not only meet licensing requirements but also deliver high-quality, compassionate care.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the concerns voiced by families and providers about the potential rigidity of licensure. Families in rural or underserved areas and communities of color must not face reduced access to services due to bureaucratic hurdles or staffing shortages. Instead, we need creative solutions to expand the pool of qualified providers and supervisors. This includes investing in training pipelines and fostering partnerships with communities to recruit diverse professionals who reflect the families they serve.

As a Somali-American woman, I also want to highlight the disproportionate rates of autism among Somali children and the unique challenges faced by our community. Language barriers, systemic racism, and a lack of cultural understanding compound these challenges. The state

has a responsibility to ensure equity in its approach, recognizing that underserved communities may require additional resources and tailored outreach to fully benefit from these services.

Parents should feel confident that the help they seek will support, not hinder, their ability to raise healthy, thriving children. I call on this committee and the Department of Human Services to embrace a balanced approach to EIDBI licensure—one that values accountability while providing providers with the tools to grow, improve, and serve families effectively.

In closing, I believe in the potential of these services to uplift our children and their families. But to fully realize this potential, we must work together to build trust, address inequities, and ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has access to the care they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

Sincerely,

Amina Adan

Educator and Community Leader