

## Testimony on SF 446 – Expanding Out-of-Home Respite Care Options

Dear Chair Hoffman, Members of the Committee,

My name is Anisa Hagi-Mohamed, and I am here on behalf of **Maangaar Voices**, an organization dedicated to supporting autistic individuals and their families, particularly within Minnesota's East African and immigrant communities. Our **mission** is to **empower immigrant individuals who are autistic or have related disabilities, along with their families and support networks, by amplifying their stories, creating supportive spaces, and offering education and training**. We believe in **solutions that work for families—not bureaucratic red tape that makes their lives harder**.

That is why we **strongly support SF 446**. Right now, **many families in our community are drowning in depression, caregiver fatigue, and burnout with nowhere to turn**. They don't know about **in-home respite**, never mind out of home respite options, they don't know about **waiver supports**, and even if they did, the process is too overwhelming for them to navigate. **They suffer in silence, feeling abandoned by a system that should be helping them**. For many of these families, **out-of-home respite could be the difference between stability and crisis**. But instead of expanding access, the state's **licensed setting requirement erased the only respite options they trusted**—options that provided **culturally relevant care** in familiar settings. At Maangaar Voices, our **vision** is to **foster a thriving, empowered community where immigrant individuals with autism and related disabilities, along with their support networks, are centered, and where cultural understanding forms the foundation of all disability-related services and programs**. But how can we create an empowered community when families are constantly struggling just to survive? We have already seen how licensing requirements hurt access to care. **Just this week, we testified about the licensing of EIDBI services, and we stand by what we said then: licensing often results in fewer solutions, not more**. It creates **more barriers, more paperwork, and fewer trusted providers**—and it makes life even more difficult for families who are already overwhelmed.

We believe that **community-driven solutions are the answer**. If given the flexibility, **organizations like ours could step in and create trusted, culturally responsive out-of-home respite options that truly serve immigrant families**. But instead of opening doors, **current regulations have closed them, leaving families isolated and unsupported**. This is not just about policy—it is about **preventing caregiver burnout, family breakdown, and, in some cases, caregiver suicide**. We must make life easier for these families, not harder. **We urge you to pass SF 446 and restore access to the respite care that families desperately need before it's too late. Because families are suffering. And lives are at stake**. Thank you.

Anisa Hagi-Mohamed

Neurodivergent Parent/Advocate

Board Chair of Maangaar Voices