Testimony in Support of SF 4696 (MIAC & DIW)

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC)

Division of Indian Work (DIW)

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC), in partnership with the Division of Indian Work (DIW), supports SF 4696 and appreciates the Legislature's work to strengthen protections for youth online. Addressing the impacts of social media on young people is an important and timely issue.

From our perspective, this bill takes meaningful steps by placing responsibility on platforms and creating safeguards intended to reduce harmful and addictive online experiences for minors.

We also want to highlight how this issue intersects with Tribal communities.

Native youth experience disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges, including elevated rates of depression and suicide compared to their peers. At the same time, for many Native youth, particularly in rural and Tribal communities, online spaces are an important way to stay connected to peers, access resources, and maintain a sense of community.

Because of that, we see value in both:

- strengthening protections from harmful and addictive platform design, and
- ensuring continued access to supportive digital spaces, alongside investments in community-based opportunities where youth can connect in person

We also want to note that this bill is content-neutral and does not focus on restricting speech, but rather on addressing features designed to drive excessive use and engagement. That distinction is important, particularly for youth who rely on digital spaces for connection and support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.