



April 24, 2025

House Ways and Means
Co-Chair Paul Torkelson
Co- Chair Zack Stephenson

Co-Chairs Torkelson, Stephenson, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) and the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), we thank you for working to assemble proposals to address the needs of Minnesota's most vulnerable residents. In a state supervised, county administered system, our county workforce on the front lines of implementing federal, state and local policies and regulations.

We recognize that state policymakers have difficult choices to make as you look at potential federal headwinds and a grim state economic outlook that overlays with increased demand for services to protect our most vulnerable residents and their families. Thank you for this opportunity to share our collective county thoughts on HF 2436 (West) addressing the needs of Minnesota's children and families.

We'd like to express our gratitude for dedicating the \$40 million requested for modernizing the Social Service Information System (SSIS). This investment, coupled with \$10 million appropriated in 2024, will allow Minnesota to draw down a federal match, positioning our state to replace this antiquated system. Notably, SSIS is the technology platform utilized for child protection. In recent years, we've seen renewed policy change in this area, with the county workforce unfortunately developing IT workarounds to implement the changes due to outdated infrastructure. We are grateful for the leadership and attention in this area and look forward to the day when workers are spending more time supporting children and families than completing data entry and administrative functions.

Investment in SSIS is a critical component of successful implementation of any new child welfare policies, including the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (The Act). We thank the Children and Families committee for its attention to addressing disproportionalities that exist in our child welfare system. We know that to successfully implement The Act across all 87 counties, there must be investments in expanded services and increased staffing with supports. We remain concerned that full implementation in 2027 may be jeopardized if there is not a runway for counties to implement concrete services (like Community and Family Resource Centers) and build staffing capacity in advance of expectations for full implementation. We urge you to consider resources in advance of 2027 so that counties can be prepared for success. Additionally, with staffing and uniform implementation concerns in mind, we ask that you consider making case review and active effort reporting a state function, as opposed to a county responsibility.



In closing, we'd also like to express our gratitude for the inclusion of provisions that allow for a child welfare response to concerns of habitual truancy and educational neglect. The aforementioned funding needs for community and family resource centers and prevention services will also support this work. We are committed to working in the remaining weeks of session to address additional concerns in the area of relative and kin licensing provisions to avoid unintended cost shifts to counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angie Thies".

Angie Thies
Child Wellbeing Policy
Analyst, AMC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Freeman".

Matt Freeman
Executive Director, MACSSA
Human Services Policy
Analyst, AMC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Jesson".

Nathan Jesson
Executive Director, MICA

Cc: Representative Nolan West
Representative Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn