



Human Services Finance Committee

SUBJECT: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR HF1434/SF1201

Dear Chair Noor and Human Services Policy Committee Members,

We are writing today to express our strong support for HF 1434 which addresses the fees paid by parents to access Medical Assistance (TEFRA) and Home and Community Based Services for children with disabilities.

These programs provide an essential pathway for people requiring high levels of support, but are often out of reach due to the high fees involved. These fees were implemented in a time when charging fees to the families of disabled children was seen as an acceptable way to balance the state budget. We believe an error was made when these fees were enacted, and it is time to ensure that individuals with disabilities and their families have the freedom to live their lives without these financial burdens that are not experienced by people without disabilities.

In our work as advocates we have heard stories from families who have left gainful employment, taken out second mortgages on their homes, lost housing, turned down promotions, or in some cases even been forced to declare bankruptcy due to the exorbitant fees associated with these programs.

Any parent will tell you that raising a child with a disability is not a burden, but the hurdles we face in trying to make sure our children have the services and supports they need most certainly are. Families of children with disabilities face obstacles in disability stigma, in ableism, in workforce shortages, in resource scarcity, in staff that are overworked, underpaid, and receive little training, and in systems that place a higher priority on protecting scarce resources than they do on providing support. Most of the problems facing families of children with disabilities are complex and difficult to solve, but this particular problem is not. It has an easy and obvious solution, and the time is now to take this important step that could be life changing for so many families.

We thank you for your consideration, and we urge your strong support of HF 1434/SF1201 to eliminate parental fees.

Sincerely,
Multicultural Autism Action Network

Fatima Molas, Co-Founder
Delia Samuel, Co-Founder

Rufo Jiru, Board Member
Maren Christenson Hofer, Executive Director