

May 7, 2021

Health and Human Services Policy and Finance Omnibus Conference Committee:

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (“the Council”) is charged by the Legislature to advise the Legislature and the Governor on matters of importance to Minnesota’s Asian Pacific communities, and in doing so, advocate on behalf of these communities within state government. It is in this capacity that we write to express our view of H.F. 2128 as it enters conference committee negotiations.

The Council is concerned that changes to the organization of the Ombudsperson for Families (“OBFF”) will result in fewer resources available to serve Asian-Pacific-, Latino-, and African-heritage families, reducing the effective capacity of the OBFF. Specifically, the creation of the Office of Ombudsperson for American Indian Families as a new state agency, and consequent transfer of funds that have previously been dedicated to the OBFF, would necessarily result in fewer resources available and risks harming the mission of the OBFF. As previously shared resources are split, current joint-staff capacity at the OBFF will be diminished, resulting in decreased service capacity for Minnesota’s children and families.

To mitigate this risk, we urge members to support the House proposal to limit transferred funding to the new agency to 25% of the special revenue fund from the Department of Human Services and to provide necessary funding for the OBFF to hire and retain the staff needed to ensure the services they provide are not adversely impacted — this includes not diverting any of the OBFF’s general fund appropriation to the new agency.

The OBFF provides critical services to Minnesota’s Asian Pacific children and families. The Ombudsperson for Asian Pacific Families is a crucial facilitator between government agencies, community resources and Asian Pacific families across the state. The Ombudsperson constantly monitors and investigates child protection matters to ensure legal compliance, with culturally appropriate considerations, and is an important voice in all child welfare policy and legislation actions. It is important for our communities that their capacity is maintained to ensure the needs of Asian Pacific families continues to be served.

We urge the Conference Committee to provide the necessary resources for the OBFF to ensure that all of Minnesota’s children and families receive the protections and service they deserve.

Sincerely,



Andrew Morris  
Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison  
Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

CC: Senator Eric Pratt  
Representative Melissa Hortman  
Representative Jim Nash