

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 & HF3714

To: **Members of the Education Policy Committee**

From: **Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage**

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): **Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage**

City of Residence: **St. Paul**

*Please record your written testimony here and return this to wilson.lee@house.mn.gov
as an OCR compliant PDF (optical character recognition)*



Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

658 Cedar Street, Suite G57

St. Paul, MN 55155

cmah@state.mn.us | 651-757-1750

March 17, 2026

Co-Chair: Rep. Peggy Bennett 23A

Co-Chair: Rep. Sydney Jordan 60A

Co-Vice Chair: Rep. Patricia Mueller 23B

Co-Vice Chair: Rep. Josiah Hill 33B

Re: Letter of Support with Recommended Amendments for HF 3714 Enrollment and eligibility priority modified for children in foster care for various children, youth, and families education and financial assistance programs; NorthStar foster care childcare allowance modified; and licensing agencies required to provide license holders with information about childcare costs and early childhood education programs.

Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage submits this letter regarding **HF 3714**, which modifies priority enrollment for children in foster care, adjusts the NorthStar foster care childcare allowance, and expands information requirements for prospective foster care licensees. The Council supports the bill's intent to strengthen access to early childhood programs and improve transparency in the foster care system.

Because African Heritage children remain disproportionately represented in Minnesota's child welfare system, certain provisions may have unintended disparate impacts. The Council therefore offers **support with recommended amendments** to ensure equitable implementation.

Recommended Amendments

1. Flexibility in the Ten-Day Licensing Requirement

HF 3714 requires relatives to complete licensing paperwork within ten days of placement. The Council recommends allowing counties to grant extensions for kinship caregivers who demonstrate good cause. This flexibility is essential to preserving culturally connected placements.

2. Continued Child Care Support Beyond Age 7 and 13 When Necessary

Automatic reductions in childcare benefits may not align with caregivers' work schedules or the availability of after-school care. The Council recommends permitting continued support when needed to maintain safe and stable placements.

3. Require Racially Disaggregated Reporting

The bill requires reporting on priority enrollment, but does not require racial or ethnic data. The Council recommends adding disaggregated reporting to ensure equitable access for African Heritage children.

4. Preserve Foster Children's Priority in Early Learning Scholarships

Income-based prioritization beginning in 2025 may reduce access for foster children. The Council recommends maintaining foster children as a top-tier priority group.

Conclusion

HF 3714 advances important goals for children in foster care. With the recommended amendments, the bill will more effectively promote equity, strengthen family stability, and ensure that African Heritage children benefit fully from its intended reforms. The Council appreciates the Committee's consideration and remains available to assist in refining statutory language.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Lolita Davis Carter | Legislative & Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the State of Minnesota's political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units, and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule, or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*

March 16, 2026

Re: HF3714 | Prioritization for Fosters for School Programming

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) strongly supports the prioritization of foster youth for school programming.

Access to after school programming is a deeply important part of ensuring normalcy, development, and social skills for any child, and in particular, foster youth. It is widely known that foster youth face increased rates of instability and lack of social connection. This bill ensures that foster youth will be a priority population in accessing much needed personal and social development programs.

Foster youth are less likely than their peers to participate in after school programming, and not due to lack of interest. Foster youth deserve to access these typical childhood programs at the same rate as other young people in our state.

Thank you for supporting this legislation and your continuing efforts to improve the experiences of foster youth.

Sincerely,



Ombudsperson for Foster Youth

651-946-2941

Misty.coonce@state.mn.us

Website: mn.gov/oofy



www.adycenter.org
admin@adycenter.org



(651) 227-4184

Hearing Date: March 18, 2026
Support for HF3714

To: Members of the Education Policy Committee

Ain Dah Yung Center is writing to express our strong support for HF3714. Meaning "Our Home" in Ojibwe, Ain Dah Yung Center provides a healing place within the community for American Indian youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness. The Ain Dah Yung Emergency Shelter provides culturally specific emergency shelter to American Indian youth who are homeless, runaway, in a family crisis, or involved with the child protection system.

After-school programming is critical for the foster youth who utilize our emergency shelter because it provides a safe, structured environment that can mitigate the negative impacts of trauma, foster a sense of normalcy, and bridge educational gaps caused by school interruptions. These programs offer emotional outlets and stability for youth dealing with uncertainty and disrupted routines. Group activities like team sports and collaborative art or cultural activities help children feel connected.

However, placement disruptions often mean that foster youth are waitlisted or denied spots in after-school and early learning programs as they transition between placements. HF3714 would remedy this by creating priority rules and ensuring spots for foster youth to be stable in school and home.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation.

Warm regards,

Sheri Riemers

Sheri Riemers, CEO

White Earth Nation of Ojibwe



Joanna Woolman
Executive Director
jwoolman@kfcmn.org
612.968.4779

Kelli Thiel
Staff Attorney
kthiel@kfcmn.org
651.410.6157

Fionna Ek
Staff Attorney
fek@kfcmn.org
651.703.7804

March 10, 2026

Re: HF3714

Dear Legislative Committee Members:

I am writing this letter of support for HF3714 because having reliable access to before and after school programming is critical for all children, and in particular for foster youth. Keeping Families Connected Minnesota provides direct legal services to relative caregivers across the state of Minnesota. We see with our clients the great need for school related supportive services for foster youth and other children in informal relative care homes.

As an organization that provides direct legal services to relative caregivers, we understand the need for supportive program to ensure that children can stay in programs that are familiar and they rely on and that caregivers can maintain their life and work schedules to be able to provide care for children in their homes.

We appreciate the many excellent efforts of Foster Advocates to advocate on behalf of foster youth in Minnesota and write today to offer our support for this bill.

Sincerely,

Joanna Woolman

Executive Director

Keeping Families Connected Minnesota



EMPOWERING EDUCATORS.
CHAMPIONING EARLY LEARNERS.

March 17, 2026

Dear Committee Chair and Members,

On behalf of **Think Small**, I am writing to express our strong support for **HF 3714**, legislation that prioritizes Fosters within school-age care programs, community education, school readiness, and child care assistance.

Think Small's mission is to advance quality care and education of children in Minnesota, particularly those facing the greatest barriers to stability and opportunity. Fosters are among the most vulnerable children in our state, and access to consistent, high-quality early care and education is critical to their healthy development and well-being. HF 3714 is an important step toward ensuring that these children receive the stability and continuity of care they need.

Foster families often face significant challenges securing child care, especially for school-age children and an inability to find care can put placements at risk. In some cases, children may need to be moved to another home solely because child care is unavailable. These disruptions are especially harmful when there are sibling groups. If care cannot be secured for older siblings, younger children may also experience disruptions in their early care and education arrangements.

Research shows continuity of care and stable early learning environments are essential for young children's healthy development. For Fosters, maintaining consistent relationships with caregivers and educators is even more critical. Prioritizing their access to school-based programs helps reduce unnecessary placement changes and supports foster families in providing stable, nurturing homes. HF 3714 reflects a child-centered approach to policy that will help remove a significant barrier to placement stability and ensure that children remain connected to their schools, caregivers, and learning environments. Think Small respectfully urges your support for HF 3714 and thanks you for your continued leadership on behalf of Minnesota's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cisa Keller".

Cisa Keller
President and CEO, Think Small

