

February 25, 2025

Chair West and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HF1276, seeking the modification to Northstar Care for Children for foster children under the age of 6 who reach permanency with relatives or within the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) placement preferences.

Part of our work at Foster Advocates has been bringing awareness to issues impacting our Foster community. We know that states were never meant to raise children, and that state intervention is only meant to be temporary.

Our county workers work diligently for Fosters to be reunified with their families when it is safe, and we know that takes time. When reunification is no longer a viable option, the next step is to find permanency, and find a supportive and loving home as soon as it is possible. The unfortunate reality is that far too many Fosters are left stuck in the system, and do not achieve true permanency. Wherever possible, we should aim to remove barriers such as this one, and help families move away from interaction with the child welfare system.

Northstar Kinship Assistance and Adoption Assistance are financial benefits for children whose custody has been transferred to a relative/kin and children who are adopted. Northstar improves permanency for children by increasing the number of children who transition from foster care into a permanent family and provides ongoing benefits to children based on the level of care needed to support the child's needs and strengths.

We hope to see this great benefit expand to include our youngest Fosters as well, so they can grow up in supportive stable homes, and with relatives whenever possible. More often than not, the families who utilize this benefit are grandparents, aunties and uncles, cousins who wish to provide that care, but are not always in the best financial position at the time they are asked to step up for them. This benefit allows us to support them, keep families together, and provide ongoing benefits to help them thrive.

Thank you for our support.

Sincerely,



Ariana Chamoun

Interim Executive Director