



**A Mother's Hope...
A Child's Life!**

May 2, 2023

Dear Members of the Health Conference Committee:

My name is Darlene Kopesky and I'm the Executive Director of Cradle of Hope and I also served on Governor Walz's statewide Infant Mortality Strategy Team. I am writing to encourage you not to repeal the positive alternative grant program. I am grateful that the Senate has not included the repeal in their bill, and I urge the House to remove the provision and keep the program in place as well.

Cradle of Hope is a non-political, non-religious, statewide non-profit organization. The Positive Alternatives funding enables Cradle of Hope to support, encourage, and assist about 2,000 pregnant families and about 1,000 families with babies each year.

Our primary services

We provide Rent Assistance to prevent evictions and family homelessness. We strive to help ensure families can stay in their homes during a pregnancy and after birth.

We also provide **safe sleep training and distribute over 200 portable cribs** each month, so every baby has a safe place to sleep.

In order to ensure that everyone in Minnesota has access to the support they need, we partner with 204 agencies, including 7 of the 11 Minnesota Tribal Nations.

The 7 Minnesota Tribal Nations we partner with include:

- Bois Forte (Boys Fort) Band of Chippewa
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Mille Lacs (Millax) Band of Ojibwe
- Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
- Upper Sioux Community
- White Earth Reservation

Our key partners include:

- The County Public Health: Family Home Visiting Nurses Program in 64 of the 87 counties in MN. They rely on our support to meet the needs of the families they serve.
- 31 hospitals and medical clinics
- 19 Shelters
- and more!

Over 2,000 of the families we serve have no support, and 34 percent of our families are experiencing premature births and medical complications. As a Positive Alternatives grant recipient, we use each dollar to reach and provide ongoing support to these families in difficult situations throughout our state. We currently receive \$350,000 each year, which makes up about 50 percent of our budget.

Losing Positive Alternatives funding would cut our budget in half and the impact across the state would be dire. Here are just a few of the avenues we may have to pursue if we lose our grant:

- The number of people we serve may be cut in half to just 1,500 families or less each year.
- We might have to cut our support to the 7 Minnesota Tribal Nations
- We may have to decrease our assistance to the County Public Health Home Visiting Nurses Program.
- We might not be able to help families in rural Minnesota.
- And may have to limit our statewide support to families in crisis.

Cutting any of these areas would be a detriment to each community and the many organizations and Tribal Nations that we serve. We strongly encourage you NOT to repeal the Positive Alternatives grant program and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our ask.

If I could be of further assistance, I would gladly meet with any legislators to discuss this further.

Thank you again,

Darlene Kopesky
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