



Saint Louis County

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Gordon Ramsay

March 18, 2025

Rep. Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn
Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar St, 5th Floor
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Rep. Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy,

As Sheriff of St. Louis County, I am writing to express my support for HF2136 (Johnson, P.). State funding for forensic interview training is important for our organization as it helps to ensure we accomplish the goal of accurate and respectful investigations of child abuse and neglect. Many law enforcement agencies and counties do not have the financial resources to send investigators for a weeklong course on forensic interviewing. This training gives much-needed legitimacy for understanding interviews involving children.

Forensic interviews gather accurate information from children to determine whether abuse has occurred and the nature of the allegations. This information supports fair and informed decision-making by our Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members. Our team consists of law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, medical, mental health, and other relevant services.

Forensic interviews must be developmentally, culturally responsive, unbiased, fact-based, and legally sound. Interviewers follow research-based guidelines to encourage free recall, minimize influence, and collect information all MDT members need to prevent redundant interviews. These interviews are crucial for child protection, criminal investigations, prosecution, medical assessments, mental health support, and service implementation—ensuring safety, healing, and justice for children and families. A child's experience during the interview can significantly affect their understanding of and response to subsequent intervention steps.

Forensic interviewers must be well-trained, qualified professionals who work in a neutral setting and maintain effective communication with MDT members. They may include CAC-employed forensic interviewers, law enforcement officers, CPS workers, or other MDT-designated professionals. At a minimum, they must complete formal, nationally recognized forensic interviewer training and engage in continuous peer review and professional development.

Thank you for considering this letter of support for HF2136. I look forward to this opportunity to continue working together to create safer, more connected, and thriving communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Ramsay".

Gordon Ramsay
St. Louis County Sheriff



MINNESOTA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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Phone: 651.451.7216 Fax: 651.451.8087

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March 18, 2025

Representative Kotyza-Witthuhn

5th Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association (MSA) and the 87 elected Sheriffs of Minnesota, I am writing to express our support for HF 2136, which provides essential grant funding for forensic interview training scholarships.

Child maltreatment investigations require specialized training to ensure that forensic interviews are conducted in a trauma-informed, professional, and effective manner. This bill would fund scholarships for both basic and advanced forensic interview training, as well as specialized courses addressing critical topics related to child abuse and neglect investigations. By investing in this training, we are equipping law enforcement and investigators with the necessary skills to handle these complex and sensitive cases with the highest level of professionalism and care.

Ensuring that law enforcement personnel receive the best training available is essential to protecting Minnesota's children and holding offenders accountable. The Minnesota Sheriffs' Association supports HF 2136 and urges its passage to enhance investigative capabilities and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

James Stuart
Executive Director
Minnesota Sheriffs' Association

March 19, 2025

Re: HF2136 | Forensic Interview Training Scholarships

Dear Chair West and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

The Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) strongly supports scholarships to increase availability of Forensic Interview Training for Multi-disciplinary team members and interviewers at Children's Advocacy Centers.

Ensuring that individuals who complete Forensic Interviews receive basic and advanced training on nationally recognized protocols, helps promote experiences that are focused on healing, justice, and safety for children and youth. It helps minimize situations where youth who have experienced abuse or neglect are re-traumatized by well-intentioned interviewers who lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and training on best practices, or through unsound procedures that succumb children to redundant interviews about sensitive and painful experiences.

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

Sincerely,



Ombudsperson for Foster Youth

651-946-2941

Misty.coonce@state.mn.us

Website: mn.gov/oofy



March 18, 2025

Rep Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

I am writing in support of HF 2136 (Johnson) to provide grant funding for forensic interview training scholarships. I have served as a consultant to a child advocacy center for 20 years, provide expert testimony and consultation in the field of childhood trauma, and provide therapy services to children involved in the child welfare system, many of whom have been victims of child physical or sexual abuse.

Forensic interviewing is imperative in providing a solid, consistent, research supported method of obtaining valid and accurate information from children who have had abusive experiences. Scholarships ensure that such training is available to professionals across that state. Such interviews help minimize the distress caused to children by the system response. They are as imperative in obtaining information about cases of child abuse as they are in obtaining information to identify that no abuse or neglect occurred. It cannot be overstated how different a forensic interview process is from a general interview or conversation with children.

Such interviews can start children who have been abused and neglected on a path towards recovery by providing a safe, supportive, validating space for them to share the worst things that have happened to them.

The availability of such interviews to children should not depend on a child's geographical location in regard to the financial ability to train interviewers, as such, scholarships to support the training of professionals is important to the safety and welfare of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for the consideration of this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saprina A. Matheny". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Saprina Matheny, MSW, LICSW
Psychotherapist



March 17, 2024

Dear Chair Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy,

I am writing to express my strong support for HF2136, Grant funding provided for forensic interview training scholarships, and money appropriated.

As you know, children involved in child protection cases often face tremendous challenges that require a trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate approach. Forensic interviewers are trained professionals who play a pivotal role in ensuring that these children are heard in a way that is sensitive to their experiences while also gathering the reliable information necessary for legal and protective actions. Training programs such as those offered by Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), such as First Witness or Minnesota Children's Alliance, are recognized for preparing forensic interviewers to navigate these sensitive cases effectively.

However, the demand for trained forensic interviewers continues to outpace the available resources. Funding for scholarships allows professionals from diverse backgrounds to access this essential training, ensuring more children in need are supported by individuals who understand how to minimize retraumatization and maximize accuracy in child protection investigations. This is particularly critical in our communities that do not have a CAC available to them.

Funding forensic interviewing aligns with QPI-MN's mission to promote excellent parenting and strong, nurturing relationships for children in the child welfare system. By equipping more professionals with the skills necessary for effective forensic interviewing, we can create better safety plans, ensure the well-being of children, and foster environments where they can thrive.

Investing in training scholarships is not only a matter of addressing immediate needs; it is a long-term investment in the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members. I urge you to support the appropriation of funds for this vital purpose and to champion the important work being done in the field of child protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136.

Sincerely,

Kate Rickord, MA, LP, SEP
Director, QPI-MN
Kate@qpimn.org
612.619.0086 (direct)

Ensuring excellent, developmentally informed parenting in the child welfare system.