

March 11, 2026

RE: Support for HF 2937– Regulating the Use of Parenting Consultants in Family Court

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee,

The **Minnesota Shared Parenting Action Group** strongly supports the proposed amendments to Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 518.1751. This legislation is a necessary step toward restoring due process, accountability, and judicial oversight to Minnesota's family court system.

For too long, the role of "Parenting Consultant" (PC) has operated in a legal gray area, often granting private individuals quasi-judicial power without the constitutional safeguards required of a court of law. While the intent of the PC role was to reduce litigation, the reality for many Minnesota families has been the opposite: a "privatized" justice system that is prohibitively expensive, lacks transparency, and frequently traps parents in high-conflict cycles with no clear exit.

Our support for this bill is rooted in three key principles:

- **Restoring Judicial Authority:** A private contractor should never have the power to override a court order or unilaterally alter parenting time. This bill correctly clarifies that the court—not a hired consultant—is the ultimate arbiter of a child's best interests.
- **Ensuring Due Process and Accountability:** By making PC decisions non-binding and inadmissible, this bill ensures that if a parent's fundamental rights are at stake, those rights will be protected in a courtroom with a record, evidence, and a presiding judge.
- **Empowering Parents:** The ability for a party to discharge a consultant by written notice is a vital protection. Under the current system, parents are often forced to remain in professional relationships with consultants they believe are biased or ineffective, simply because they cannot afford the legal fees required to seek a court-ordered removal.

Minnesota families deserve a system that is fair, affordable, and grounded in the rule of law. This bill ensures that professional "guidance" remains just that—guidance—rather than a shadow legal system that bypasses the protections of the State of Minnesota.

We urge you to vote **YES** on this bill to protect the rights of Minnesota parents and the well-being of their children.

Sincerely,

George J. Rerat

The Minnesota Shared Parenting Action Group

To: Minnesota House Judiciary and Civil Law Committee: Co-Chairs and Members
From: Molly K Olson
Minnesota citizen and resident of MN Legislative District 41A
Center for Parental Responsibility, Founder
An all-volunteer unpaid citizen education and activist group in MN since the year 2000. We seek family law reform that will better support and protect parent-child relationships for fit parents.
Date: March 11, 2026
Subject: 2026 bill HF2937 - Testimony in Support

I speak as an unpaid Minnesota citizen and activist who has engaged with parents for 27 years who have had bad experiences with family court - including all the processes and practitioner's families are required or suggested to hire or go through. I have not just spoke with affected parents. But over the years, I have read thousands of court decisions, parenting consultant decisions, custody evaluations, motions, affidavits, and the laundry list of very long, very intense, very damaging processes parents are put through in family court. I have been researching all issues related to family court for 27 years. I network with organizations, practitioners, and researchers from across the country.

Parenting consultants (PC's) are a specific practice specialty found in family court. PC's are just one of the plethora of family court practitioners that are often recommended to (or forced on) parents in family court cases. The number of different family court types of practitioners has exponentially grown in use (and mis-use) over the last 20+ years.

Someone else can tell you the history of when Parenting Consultants started in Minnesota. But I believe the PC's started about the time parenting expeditors were proven to have so little authority, that they became an extra mostly ineffective practitioner in the family court process. It seems to me, parenting consultants became more in vogue about or around 2005. Since then the use of PC's has grown and grown. It has become one more family law area of practice that lawyers can add to their services. There is actually a huge web of family court practitioners that is often next to impossible to break out of for too many families. It seems it's become common practice to label cases "high conflict" - that seems to be the magic work to get parents into more and more services, requiring more and more unaffordable law or quasi-law practitioners. Parenting consultant's end up often getting involved in every single little problem parents have - perhaps in many cases because one parent simply refuses to take personal responsibility to work cooperatively.

This bill is needed, because parenting consultants have taken way too much power and control over family court cases.

Some of the problems with Parenting Consultants all too often include the following:

- PC's are suggested in cases as a way to help smooth out the conflict and make decisions where parents can't - seems benign on the outset. But like so many things, the devils in the details.
- PC's have unlimited discretion and complete flexibility to demand whatever they want of parents.
- Parents can be forced to sign contracts that never end. Unknowing parents who trust the system to truly do the right thing, are coerced into paying for a service they sometimes are contracted forever with no way out. If they try dismiss the PC, they are reminded they signed a contract for services. Some contracts are limited to two years. I have seen some with no end date.
- PC's are under no obligation to follow the U.S. Supreme Court law of the land which states that parents have a constitutionally fundamental right to the parent-child relationship except if clear and convincing evidence of harm to the child.
- PC's do not have to follow any legal standards of evidence. But when their decisions are appealed to a judge, the judge will go with the PC because they know the family best.
- PC qualifications are not what they should be.
- PC's often require access to all the private information they want to collect. Parents are even at times forced to authorize the PC to obtain all individual, children and family therapy notes. (That could be 4 therapists total). If a parent objects to giving a PC access to personal therapy notes (which may include information completely unrelated to co-parenting) the parent is labeled uncooperative too often ends up being on the losing end of every subsequent parenting time decision.
- There is no consistent regulation on the facts they are required to consider. Sure, they hide under "the best interest of the child" - but the incredible broad, vague, subjective "best interest criteria" can be interpreted however anyone wants. The "best interest of the child" criteria is really no consistent or effective standard at all.
- PC's have no clear boundaries for their authority. They have unbridled authority to usurp court orders and make any interpretation they want for any reason they want.
- PC's can establish their own rules on what is off the record or on the record. Critical evidence often gets overlooked or minimized for the sake of expediency.
- PC's are unaffordable to most parents.

This is the short list of problems with the use of Parenting Consultants in family court.

While this bill does not solve all problems with the profession of parenting consultants, it is a good first step.

Molly K Olson

Center for Parental Responsibility, Founder

Project Mission: remove the obstacles that prevent both parents from being fully and equally involved in the life of their child(ren).

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Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I am submitting this testimony to strongly oppose House File 2937. I speak from direct experience with a high-conflict family situation that illustrates why limiting the authority of parenting consultants could harm children and families in very real ways.

In this case, I am a parent in a divorce where disputes over parenting time, holiday schedules, school choice, and daily routines are constant. The conflict is ongoing, and both parents struggle to communicate productively. The children — ages 9 and 12 — have already experienced significant emotional stress, including one child having a mental health crisis that required an emergency room visit, largely due to the uncertainty and tension surrounding custody and scheduling.

The parenting consultant in this situation has been the only neutral, trained professional able to step in and make decisions that keep the children's routines stable. For example:

- Determining the method of communication and the requirement to participate in coparent coaching
- Finalizing a balanced holiday schedule and adjusting the parenting time to be more equitable
- Determining the logistics of activities and exchanges when parents cannot agree

HF2937 would remove the consultant's ability to make even these neutral, day-to-day decisions, leaving children exposed to constant disruption and conflict. Without the consultant's guidance, parents are forced to return to court repeatedly, creating more stress, more delays, and more expense, while the children's emotional well-being suffers.

It is also important to recognize that parenting consultants are not imposed on families without consent. Both parties voluntarily agree to the appointment of a parenting consultant and sign an agreement defining the consultant's authority and scope. In doing so, each parent acknowledges and accepts that the consultant may issue binding decisions within that defined scope when the parents cannot resolve disputes themselves. Because the process is voluntary and clearly defined in advance, both parties understand the role and authority of the consultant at the time they enter the agreement. Limiting that authority after the fact undermines the purpose of the agreement and removes an important dispute-resolution mechanism that the parents knowingly chose to rely upon.

In addition, parenting consultants provide a uniquely valuable perspective to the court. Unlike the parents, who understandably advocate for their own positions, the consultant is a neutral professional who has ongoing visibility into the family's communication patterns, the children's routines, and the practical realities of implementing parenting plans. Their observations and recommendations can provide judicial officers with balanced, informed insight that might otherwise be unavailable in a courtroom setting where the judge hears only limited testimony

from each side. Preventing judicial officers from considering the consultant's recommendations removes an important source of neutral information that can help the court make decisions in the best interests of the children.

Parenting consultants provide a critical buffer between parents and the court, ensuring that children's best interests are prioritized even when parents are unable to compromise. Removing their practical authority does not protect families; it increases conflict and harms the children.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose HF2937 and preserve the vital role of parenting consultants in high-conflict family situations. Children's stability and well-being must remain the priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Gerry Brisco
Rockford, Minnesota