



Bellis

Adoption Education & Support

March 7, 2023

Chair Jamie Becker-Finn
559 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Bill to Establish an Office of Appellate Counsel and Training (HF 922/SF 1642)

Chair Becker-Finn and Members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

I write in support of H.F. 922, which would establish an Office of Appellate Counsel and Training. I am the executive director of Bellis™, a non-profit organization located in Minneapolis, that provides support for mothers who have lost their parental rights to their children through the child protection system.

In our work at Bellis, we hear time and time again from mothers about how confused and overwhelmed they felt during their child protection cases due to both the complexity of the legal proceedings and because of the trauma and stress of being involved in this particular type of legal proceeding. They are often without the knowledge, tools or resources to effectively advocate for themselves.

For this reason, parents involved in child protection matters need qualified and well-trained attorneys to guide them through this challenging time and to protect their rights. Having a central Office that would provide training, resources and ongoing support to all parent attorneys in the state would help ensure that all parents have access to the legal support they need during their case.

In addition, the decisions made in child protection matters are life-altering and often devastating for all those involved. This Office would be one tool for providing important accountability and oversight of these decisions. Ensuring all parents who experience a termination of parental rights have an attorney available to review and appeal their case, provides accountability in each individual case and for the entire system. This is critical to ensuring families are not needlessly torn apart.

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Sincerely,

Jenny Eldredge
Executive Director

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