



An association of resources and advocacy for children, youth and families
www.aspiremn.org

March 24, 2026

Dear Co-Chair Kotyza-Witthuhn, Co-Chair West and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee,

AspireMN is a statewide association of children and family serving organizations with delivery of care in children's mental health, child welfare, and a variety of service models oriented to provide early intervention for families, meet critical needs and promote family preservation.

We appreciate the leadership from this committee in advancing HF3024 in its updated and amended form at your March 25 hearing. We believe that the updated language continues to recognize the importance of honoring youth voices, respond to adverse experiences, and affirms the rights that all children and youth should have while in foster care.

Children and family service providers are often delivering care to children and youth during their experiences in foster care – across the service continuum. AspireMN supports Quality Parenting Initiative-MN and the key values of lived experience leadership, research-informed service and meaningful relationships as necessary for excellence in foster care and truly our full continuum of children and family services.

Based on experiences of serving and supporting children and youth in foster care, AspireMN supports HF3024 and establishing this updated Minnesota's Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Sincerely,

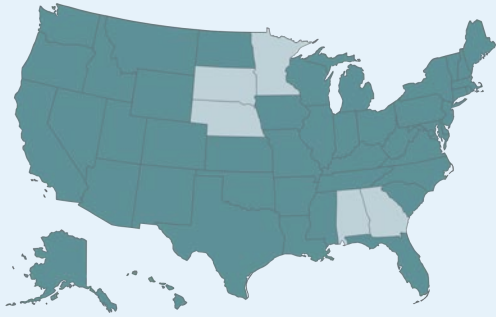
Kirsten Anderson
Executive Director

AspireMN improves the lives of children, youth and families served by member organizations through support for quality service delivery, leadership development and policy advocacy.

1919 University Avenue W. #450, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104



Foster Youth Bill of Rights - Fact Sheet - SF3154 / HF3024



5 of 50

states (including MN)
do not have rights
for foster youth in
statute or policy



2 of 3

foster youth are
school-age or older

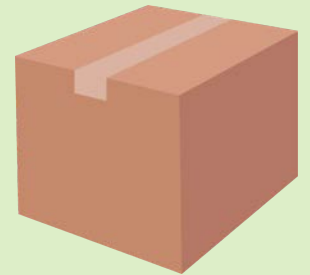
5,865

average number of
children and youth in
foster care on a given
day in 2024.



1,208

children who **moved 2 or more**
times in foster care.

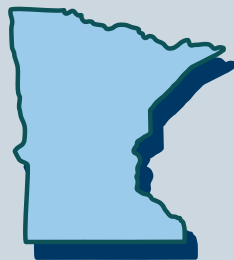


755 million
spent in MN on child
welfare services in 2020.

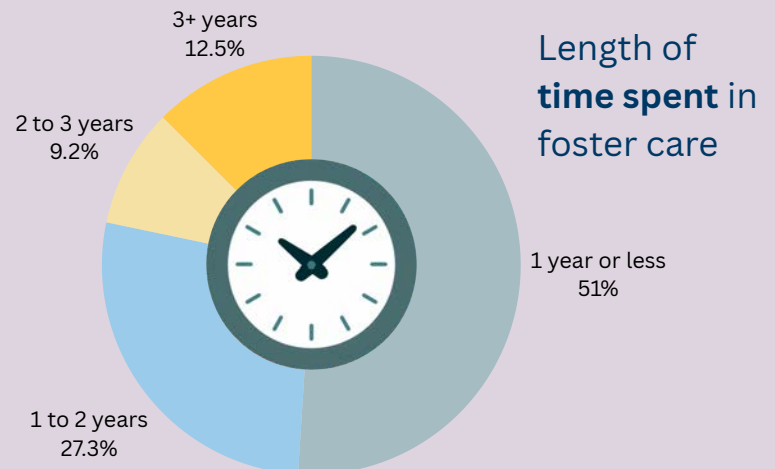
6.5%

more children **re-entered**
foster care in MN (vs. the
federal benchmark).

Each of the **87 Minnesota**
counties has a different
approach to foster care.



Children and youth
deserve **clear rights**
during the instability and
confusion of foster care.



Length of
time spent in
foster care

1 year or less
51%

1 to 2 years
27.3%

2 to 3 years
9.2%

3+ years
12.5%

Foster Youth Bill of Rights – [SF3154/HF3024](#)

Date: March 2026

From: The Minnesota Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY)

Re: Proposed Foster Youth Bill of Rights, Seeking Support and Providing Information

Chief Authors: Representative Jessica Hanson and Senator Mary Kunesh

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Background

Minnesota is one of only five states that does not have the rights of foster youth codified in statute, administrative code, or agency policy. Of the eleven states whose child welfare systems are county-administered or hybrid models, Minnesota is the only state without foster youth rights collected in one place.

Foster youth often experience frequent moves, disrupted relationships, and instability. The challenge of improving foster care outcomes in Minnesota is compounded by the high degree of variation in standards seen from county to county.

Right now, foster youth's rights are unclear, incomplete, and spread across different sections of state and federal statute. A single, consolidated Foster Youth Bill of Rights ensures that everyone, in every county in Minnesota, is operating from the same standard and provides clarity on the safeguards for foster youth who are often the most vulnerable children and youth.

Bill Development and Consultation

In initial draft development, OOFY reviewed:

- The rights documents for foster youth in 45 other states;
- Other Minnesota initiatives, including foster youth rights and the Rights of the Indian Child and;
- Minnesota Bills of Rights for other populations, such as residents in assisted living facilities.

The initial draft was shared with 30+ former Minnesota foster youth to better understand priorities and gaps. At various phases, input was gathered from over 100 people in all roles, including:

- Foster and adoptive parents,
- Biological relatives,
- Guardians ad litem,
- Attorneys,
- Judges,
- Social workers, and;
- Others.

OOFY has also incorporated and responded to technical assistance from:

- The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families,
- The Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators Children’s Committee leadership,
- The Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities,
- The Minnesota Council for LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans, and;
- Other community organizations.

OOFY has consulted with ombudsperson offices in other states, and relevant national groups such as the National Association of Council for Children.

About OOFY

The [Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson](#) (OOFY) hears concerns and complaints from anyone, prioritizing concerns from young people about their rights, care, safety, and placement in Minnesota foster care. OOFY is an independent, neutral state agency that is fully separate from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. OOFY was created through the advocacy of people with experience in foster care.



INDIAN AFFAIRS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 12042025_02

Foster Youth Bill of Rights

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council membership consists of representatives of ten of the eleven federally-recognized Indian Tribes located within the State of Minnesota, members of the legislature, commissioners from the state department; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council is a liaison between the state and local units of government in the delivery of services to American Indians in the State of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, American Indian populations are often identified by the various federal and state agencies as a minority and smallest ethnic group in the United States; and

WHEREAS, American Indian people are citizens of, or descendants of citizens of sovereign nations, federally recognized tribes, and possess a unique political status that is not racial or ethnic in nature; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota is one of only five states that does not have a comprehensive set of rights codified for foster youth, leaving youth in care and their supporters without the information or tools to advocate for themselves effectively; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Foster Youth Bill of Rights was introduced to ensure youth are informed of their rights while in foster care and to strengthen existing legal protections; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bill is intended to complement existing laws and protections and does not replace or diminish the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) or the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).

WHEREAS, Native youth are significantly overrepresented in the foster care system, and the proposed bill provides additional support and protections for all foster youth; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bill was developed in collaboration with and through the consultation of current and former Minnesota foster youth, along with input from agency staff, attorneys, Guardians ad Litem, non-profit professionals, members of the MIFPA Phase III workgroup, and through a review of foster youth rights legislation in 45 other states, and the proposed *Rights of the Indian Child*; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bill provides strengthened protections for foster youth's relationships with siblings, family, extended family, and relatives as defined by youth or tribal traditions, the right to be free from all forms of maltreatment, the right to connection with community, including language, people, and events, and the right to practice their own spirituality and religious beliefs; and

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council hereby extends support for the passage and implementation of the Minnesota Foster Youth Bill of Rights introduced in the 2025 legislative session, SF3154/HF3024 as authored by Senator Mary Kunesh and Representative Jessica Hanson.

CERTIFICATION: We do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly presented and acted upon by a vote of 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Silent at Regular Meeting of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, a quorum present, held on December 04, 2025, in Lower Sioux Indian Community, Cansayapi, Minnesota.



Robert Deschampe, Chairman
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council



Carlos Hernandez, Vice Chairman
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council



March 10, 2026

Re: H3024/SF3154 | Foster Youth Bill of Rights

Dear Committee Chair(s) and Members:

As individuals and organizations dedicated to the wellbeing, support, and empowerment of Fosters here in Minnesota, we are writing to urge the committee to pass HF3024/SF3154, the Foster Youth Bill of Rights. We believe this critical legislation represents an essential step in ensuring that every child and youth in Minnesota's foster care system is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect.

Foster youth face unique and often overwhelming challenges as they navigate their way through the foster care system. Many of these young people experience a sense of instability and uncertainty, and too often, they do so without a clear understanding of their rights or the processes to raise concerns when those rights are violated. The lack of a consistent, accessible framework has left many foster youth feeling isolated and powerless, unable to advocate for themselves in situations that affect their safety, well-being, and future.

Minnesota is one of only five states without a Foster Youth Bill of Rights, making Minnesota behind the curve in addressing this lack of clarity for foster youth. HF3024/SF3154 seeks to address these issues by providing a comprehensive, clearly defined, and easily accessible set of rights for Minnesota foster youth. This bill consolidates and strengthens legal protections into a single, cohesive document that outlines the rights of foster youth, making it easier for them to understand and exercise those rights. This bill is a step toward eliminating confusion and providing foster youth and those who support them with the advocacy tools they need to thrive in a complex system.

Additionally, the bill will help promote consistency and fairness across the state, ensuring that foster youth, no matter where they are living, are afforded the same rights, protections, and opportunities. It will create a standard of care that ensures every youth is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve, fostering a more equitable and supportive environment for all youth in care.

We strongly support the passage of HF3024/3154 and encourage all those who care about the wellbeing and future of Minnesota Fosters to join us in advocating for its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support on HF3024/SF3154.

Sincerely, the following organizations and individuals,

(*) Indicates individuals with lived experience in foster care

Ampersand Families – Christina Zeise, Executive Director

Atlas of Blackness – Lucina Kayee*, MSW, LGSW, Executive Director, and licensed psychotherapist

Children’s Advocacy Institute - Amy Harfeld, National Policy Director

Children’s Justice Task Force – Dawn Hyland*, Survivor of Foster Care

Connections to Independence - Jessica Rogers*, Founder & Executive Director

Councils for Minnesotans of African Heritage – Theodore Rose, Managing Director, Policy

Department of Indian Work – Theresa Halvorson-Lee, Director

Ed Allies – Joshua Crosson, Executive Director

Family Alternatives – Mary Lennick, Executive Director

Face to Face Health & Counseling – Hanna Getachew-Kreusser, MA, Chief Executive Officer

Foster Advocates – Osahon Akpata-Tanious, MPP

Greater Twin Cities United Way – Ivette Izea-Martinez, Sr. Program Officer, Advocacy

Journie Project – Nashauna Johnson-Lenoir, Executive Director

Minnesota Children’s Alliance – Marcia Milliken, Executive Director

National Association of Counsel for Children – Allison Green

Office of the Indian Ministry at the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Gichitwaa Kateri church – Robert Haarman, Director & Pastoral Administrator

Office of Ombudsperson for Families – Muriel Gubasta, Ombudsperson for Spanish-speaking and Hispanic/Latino Families

Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities – Lisa Harrison-Hadler, Ombudsman

Ogilvie Public Schools – Jacqueline Forcelle, LSW, mental health practitioner

People Serving People – Hoang Murphy*, President & CEO

Power of Story – Alisa Matheson, Executive Director

Research in Action - Dr. Brittany Lewis, CEO

SEL Academy – Tascha Just, Ed.S., NCSP, MSPA President elect (MN School psych assoc), MN’s CJA Task Force Chair

The Right Reach LLC - Charie Gill-Baptist*, Founder/CEO

Quality Parenting Initiative-MN – Kathy Duffy, MSW, LICSW, Assistant Director

Village Arms – Kelis Houston, Executive Director

Youthprise - Kristy Snyder, Policy + System Transformation Officer

Ace Goff*

Bee Huna*

Bella Brownlee*, Foster, educator, advocate

Chelsea Kolgi*, First Generation Native American College Student

Danielle Thomas*

Diamond Williams*, Foster

El Humphrey*, Foster Advocate

Erin Gantz*, Professional Advocate

Jessica Smith*

Kaja Just*

Kia Jones*, Community Board Member, Foster Advocates

Keith Riser*

Lucy Arias*, MEd, MA

Maci Kean*, Former Foster Youth, Senior Project Specialist at National Adoption Association

Marlena Jasch*, Person with Lived Experience & Consultant to the State

Marqueishia Jackson*, Foster Care Advocate

Mercedes Rosenberg-Thompson*

Michael D. Davis-Thomas*, Chair, Michigan Juvenile Justice Advisory Council • Former Chair/President, Statewide Foster Care Advisory Board • CEO & Founder, MDDTSpeaks Holdings, Inc. • Lived Expert Advisor, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – Children’s Services Agency • Foster Healing Leadership Fellow • Advocate, Author, and National Speaker • Former Dual Ward of the State – Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems • Child

Welfare, Juvenile Justice, Education, and Mental Health Reform Leader

Nia Dyer*

Nicole Anderson*

Renee Smith*

Sage Desai*, Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson Advisory Board Member, Foster Advocate Specialist

Sasha Jakovich*

Shana King*, Parent Mentor/ Community Outreach Advocate

Tiffany Omete*, Advocate

Tunisia Reed*, Village Arms Family Liaison

Travis Matthews*

Victoria Alonzo*, YLC Member, Associates in Arts and Science

Whitney Bekaert*, Foster, Community Engagement Manager

William Woelki*, PhD Student University of Delaware – Foster Care Researcher

Abigail Carlson, Physics Major, Spanish Major, Engineering Associate 1, Aunty, Sister, Daughter

Abigail Voss

Alec Sanchargin

Alex Valero, CNA

Amelia Didier

Amy Lopez, Wax Lab LLC

Angie Fertig, PhD

Anthony Meng, Author, Paralegal & Storyteller

Aysia Dukes

Barbara Schultz, LSW

Bella Bassat

Brigitte Seim, Professor & Former Foster Parent

Caitlyn Barrett,

Carla Mantel

Corrien Knuckles, MSW

Cresston Gackle, Lawyer & Community Member

DeClara Tripp, Family Liaison/Case Manager

Devin Rhoades

Diane Stang, Former County Foster Care Supervisor

Dustin O'Brien

Elena Leomi, Adoptive parent, MSW, MPH

Emily Geray, BA in Human Services & Psychology | Relationship-Driven Leader | Advocate for Equity, Education, Belonging & Environmental Stewardship | Passionate Mentor & Connector | Committed to Lifting Communities Through Hope and Collaboration

Erika Elbrecht

Evan Johnson

Eyerusalem Cheney

Ezra Jackson-Smith

Grace Johnson

Guinevere Feight

Hannah Osen

Heather Cargill, PsyD, LP (Doctor of Psychology, Licensed Psychologist)

Ida Smith

Jean Ross

Jenna Shreifels

Jennifer Mulligan, Youth Advocate

Jill Stewart-Kellar, Parent, Community Member, Director of Career and College Readiness, Principal

JoAnne Norris, Foster parent

Joe Soss, Cowles Chair for the Study of Public Service, Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs

John Lagen

Jon Olson, Commander, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Jordan Moghanaki

Joseph Grobe

Joseph Cobb

Joshua Nygren

Kathleen Wood

Kari Anne Hohn, Child Protection Manager

Kayden Rinzel

Kayla Bogdonavich

Kelly L-T, LSW
Kourtney Fitzpatrick
Lacy Hubert, Child Protection Social Worker
Dr. Lisa Kiesel, PhD, LICSW
Lisa Marshall
Livy Clemens, B.A.
Lynette Kleinschmidt, LSW - Lutheran Social Service
of MN, Youth Services Willmar Area
Marlo Gangi, M.A., College faculty
Marisela Morales
Mara Borges-Gatewood
Marie Morrow
Marvalyne Tripp, Family and Community Advocate,
MAAFPCWDA Statewide Workgroup Member, CJA
Task Force Member
Maylene Payne
Melissa Franson, Adoptive Parent, Licensed Foster
Care Provider, Licensed Social Worker
Melinda Doms, Guardian ad Litem
Meredith Nance

Moi Boudoir, Foster Care Specialist
Mohamed Shukri
Morgan McKee
Myrka Zambrano
Mr. Raef Eddins, EBP
Pamela Kay St. Michel
Rebecca Dosch, PhD, Public Policy; Interdisciplinary
Education and Community Engagement Director and
the UMN Institute on Community Integration
Rori Coleman-Woods, City Council Member –
Richfield, Minnesota
Sadie Berlin
Samantha Bauer
Shelly Pacheco
Stephanie Lindekugel, ISD 622 North St. Paul,
Maplewood, Oakdale Foster Care Student Support
Specialist
Stephen Norton
Sofia Ali, MD, MPH
Vanesa Garcia Gomez



November 1, 2025

Re: Support for HF3024/SF3154 | Foster Bill of Rights

The Ain Dah Yung Center supports the Foster Bill of Rights for Minnesota foster youth – a critical measure that recognizes and affirms the fundamental rights of foster youth within the child welfare system.

Foster youth face unique and complex challenges as they navigate the child welfare system. Many of these young people experience a sense of instability and uncertainty, and too often, they do so with a troubling lack of clarity of what rights they have while in care. This leaves our youth, and those who support them, without the tools and knowledge to effectively advocate for themselves and their rights while in care.

Meaning “Our Home” in Ojibwe, Ain Dah Yung Center provides a healing place within the community for American Indian youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness. American Indian youth thrive and heal when they have access to their cultural heritage, spiritual beliefs, and tribal communities. The protections provided in the Foster Bill of Rights would ensure Foster youth are supported in maintaining and growing these connections.

The Foster Bill of Rights is a tangible, actionable tool that ensures foster youth are frequently informed of their rights, know how to report violations, and are treated with dignity in every aspect of their time in care. Additionally, the bill will provide consistency and fairness across the state by creating a standard of care, ensuring that regardless of where foster youth live, they are afforded the same rights, protections, and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Sheri Riemers

Sheri Riemers, CEO



Family Preservation Committee

February 6, 2026

Re: Support for HF3024/SF3154 | Foster Bill of Rights

The Metro Urban Indian Directors (MUID) Family Preservation Committee supports the Foster Bill of Rights for Minnesota foster youth – a critical measure that recognizes and affirms the fundamental rights of foster youth within the child welfare system.

Foster youth face unique and complex challenges as they navigate the child welfare system. Many of these young people experience a sense of instability and uncertainty, and too often, they do so with a troubling lack of clarity of what rights they have while in care. This leaves our youth, and those who support them, without the tools and knowledge to effectively advocate for themselves and their rights while in care.

Many of the American Indian families that we work with have been impacted by the child welfare and foster care systems. This involvement is charged with the historical trauma of the forced removal of American Indian children from their families for decades. American Indian foster youth deserve a right to maintain a relationship with their tribal community and access to their cultures. The Foster Bill of Rights is a step towards protecting this right.

The Foster Bill of Rights is a tangible, actionable tool that ensures foster youth are frequently informed of their rights, know how to report violations, and are treated with dignity in every aspect of their time in care. Additionally, the bill will provide consistency and fairness across the state by creating a standard of care, ensuring that regardless of where foster youth live, they are afforded the same rights, protections, and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Laura Newton, Chair

A Place for Foster Youth to Be Heard

If you have been in foster care in Minnesota, the Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) is here to listen to you!



We Listen

We listen to you about any concerns you might have about your care.



We Inform

We provide information. We can answer questions you have, or connect you to someone else who can help answer questions.

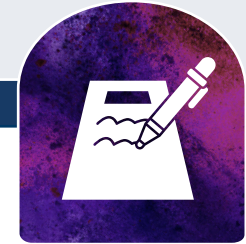


We Take Action

In some cases, we will take action to address your concerns. That can include:

- Looking at paperwork
- Speaking to others
- Making sure the right people know about your concern

Whenever possible, we will get your permission before taking action.



We Recommend & Report

We may suggest changes to others to help with your concerns. For example, we might make a recommendation to your caseworker or the place where you live. We also suggest changes to people who make laws to improve foster care in Minnesota.



Contact Us



www.mn.gov/oofy



651-946-2940



info.oofy@state.mn.us



[instagram.com/oofyminnesota](https://www.instagram.com/oofyminnesota)

Not Sure Where to Turn? We're Here to Listen.

Got a question or problem in foster care? You're not alone—there are people who can help. Follow these steps to know who to talk to and when to reach out to OOFY.

1

Talk to the person directly

If you have a question, concern, or complaint, it is a good idea to first **talk to the person directly**. This gives them a chance to fix the problem.

If this does not help, or you do not feel comfortable talking to this person, proceed to step 2

2

Contact a person in charge or a trusted adult

A **person in charge** is the person who makes decisions. It could be a boss, manager, supervisor, or director.

- There should be a “formal grievance procedure” for the place you live and the county or agency that supports you. You can ask how to submit a grievance.



A grievance is an official complaint over something believed to be wrong or unfair.

A **trusted adult** might include your caseworker, a relative, a teacher, Guardian ad Litem, attorney, or any other adult you are comfortable talking to!

If this does not help, or you do not know who to talk to, proceed to step 3



3

Reach out to OOFY

If any of the following are true, you should **contact us**:

- If you don't feel safe talking to the people listed here.
- If you don't know who to talk to, or what to do next.
- If you have already tried to get help and your problem has not been fixed.
- If you aren't sure you are in foster care.

For more resources, or to submit a complaint, visit:



linktr.ee/oofymn

