

# Why MN Needs An African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act



*Racial Disproportionality in Child Protection*

In Minnesota

Systemic racism exists at  
every decision point of  
the child protection  
process



# African American Children and Child Welfare

African American children remain overrepresented in Minnesota's child welfare system.

This overrepresentation raises concern about child welfare policy, practice, and service delivery to African American families.

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According to current data 26% of the children in foster care in 2021 were African American although they make up only 10% of the state's total child population.

[\\*Out of Home Placement Report MN 2021.pdf](#)

Once these children are in the custody of the state, they remain in the system for much longer periods than Caucasian children do.





**SUPPORT  
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
FAMILY PRESERVATION ACT  
[ AAFPA ]  
JOIN THE FIGHT AT  
[preserveourfamilies.org](http://preserveourfamilies.org)**

# *As compared to White children, African American children are over-represented in rate of:*

Out of Home Placement Report MN 2021.pdf  
\*MNs Child Maltreatment Report 2021.pdf

- ▶ African American children are **three times** more likely to be reported
- ▶ African American and children of 2 or more races are **2.4 - 4.7 times** more likely to be screened in for assessments and investigations
- ▶ African American and children of 2 or more races are placed in out of home care at a rate **2-7 times** higher than white children
- ▶ The longer African American children remain in out-of-home care, the more they experience multiple moves in placement settings
- ▶ African American youth have high rates of reaching the age of majority when in placement for long periods of time



*SEVERAL COMPONENTS INFLUENCE DISPARITIES  
WITHIN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM  
BEGINNING WITH RACIAL BIAS IN IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING*

Mandated Reporters make the majority of reports to child protection, at 80%.

Minnesota's school personnel are among the highest reporters; current data shows that they disproportionately report African American students and families.

A school in the Minneapolis district with a 16% African American student population made 145 calls to cps, of those calls, 130 were African American students. This is consistent across service systems including medical personnel and law enforcement.



Once a CPS report is received CPS workers determine whether a family requires investigation or assessment.

When assigning reports to a family investigation path there are both mandatory and discretionary reasons.



Allegations concerning Black children are more likely to be assigned for investigation for discretionary reasons than those concerning white children.

Although Black families are entering the system for less serious allegations than their white counterparts, they continue to face the most harsh and punitive outcomes at significantly higher rates (*child removals, maltreatment findings, termination of parental rights*).

Discretionary reasons "**include a recent or frequent history of child maltreatment reports** or child protective services, or the caretaker **appeared** to be unwilling or unable to achieve child safety."

# Removal bias

Statistics confirm that Black families are less likely to receive in-home services that prevent removal.

Thus, the state is more likely to permit white children to remain with their families and remove Black children from theirs.

Shanta Trivedi, The Harm of Child Removal, 43 New York University Review of Law & Social Change 523 (2019). Available at: [https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all\\_fac/1085](https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac/1085)

In MN African American and children of 2 or more races (facing the same or less serious allegations) are removed from their home at a rate 2 and 7 times higher than their white counterparts.

[\\*Out of Home Placement Report MN 2021.pdf](#)

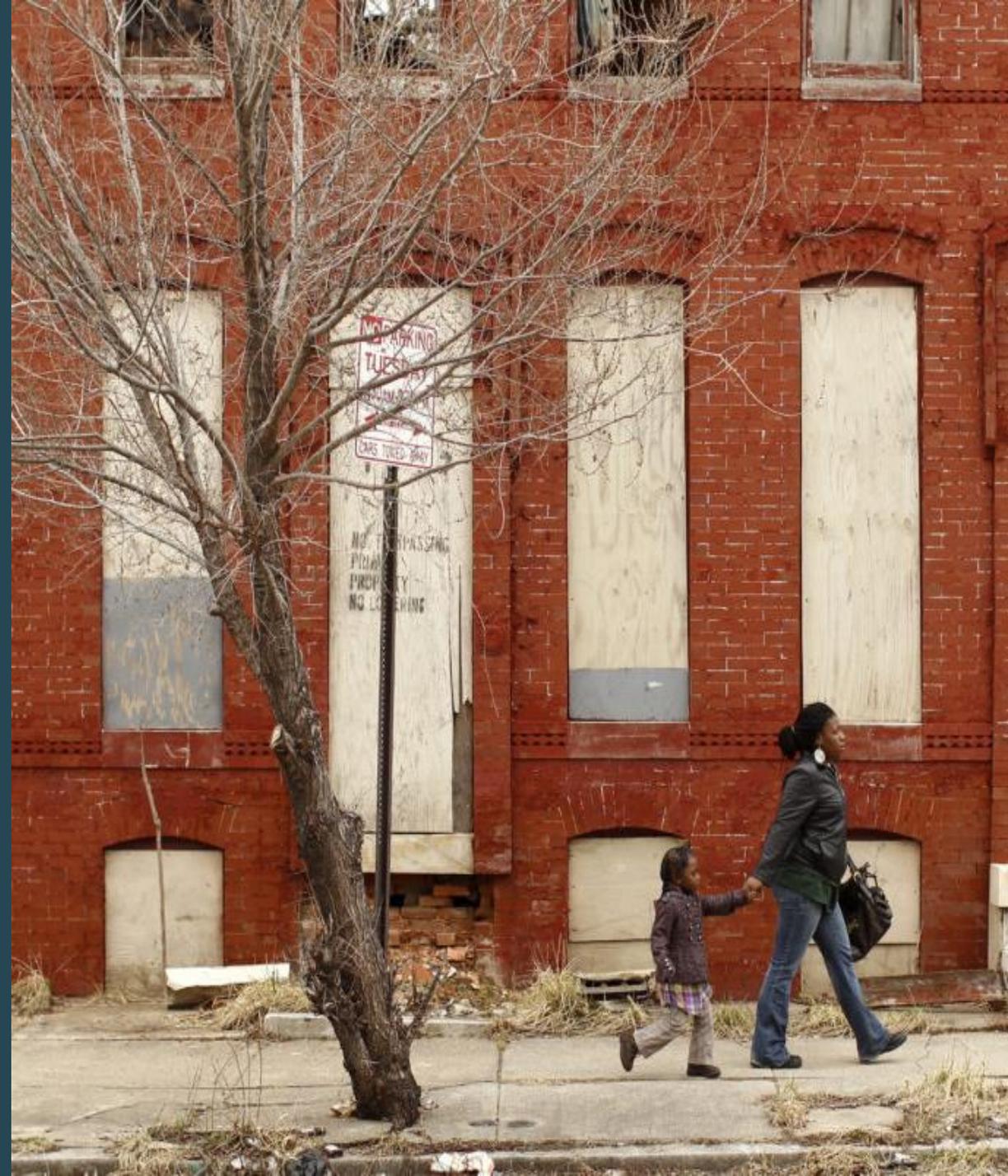


# Poverty Labeled as Neglect

Black children are nearly three times more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts. As such, Black families tend to have more contact with county and state officials, leaving them vulnerable to surveillance.

Low-income families are more likely to seek medical care from emergency rooms or public clinics, use public transportation, and live in public housing, leading to frequent interaction with government systems and increased visibility to child protection agencies.

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# *Why is the rate of child welfare involvement higher for certain groups in comparison to others?*

**Institutional Racism-** It is the existence of systemic policies and practices that allow one racial group to have better outcomes than another. It is embedded in the economic and political structures which place non-white racial and ethnic groups at a disadvantage in relation to an institution's white members. Institutional racism leads to unequal outcomes for different groups of people. In this environment, disproportionality is often tolerated as normal rather than investigated and challenged.

# PARENTING WHILE BLACK

**There is often a cultural divide between a family being investigated and the worker conducting the investigation.**

**Social workers, including the child welfare workforce, tend to be non-Hispanic White women.**



Survey Instrument: Bedroom with Black baby



Survey Instrument: Bedroom with White baby



In a 2012 study, researchers used an experiment to test the “racialized perceptions” of hundreds of child welfare workers across Minnesota.

Caseworkers in eighty-two counties were given an online exercise during training.

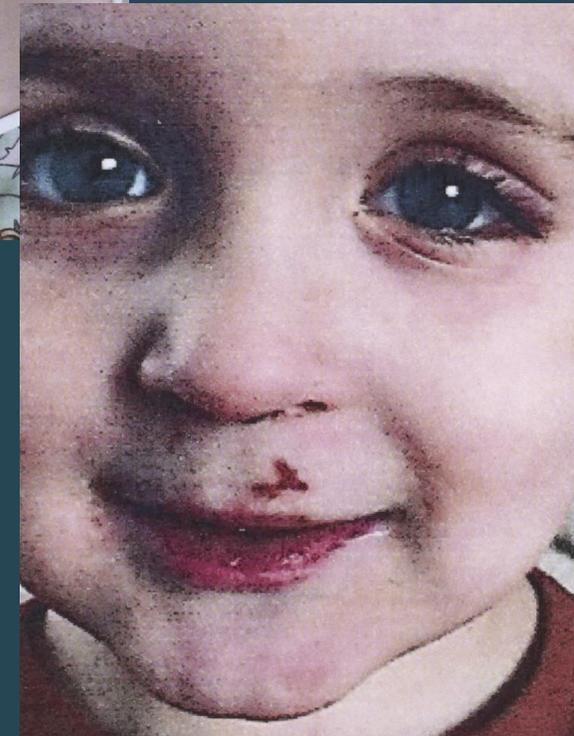
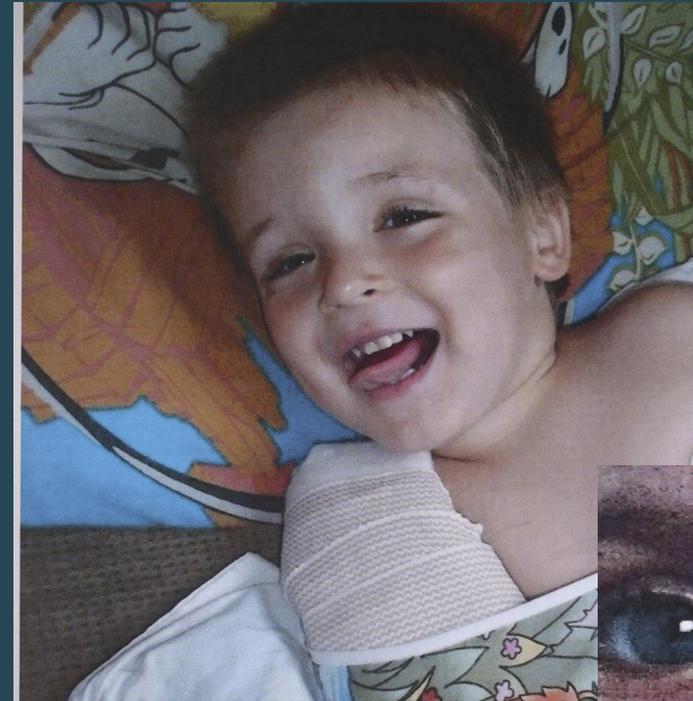
Researchers discovered that the caseworkers were significantly *more* likely to agree that the photo of the Black baby, not the White one, met the state’s definition of neglect.

Racialized Perceptions and Child Neglect. Ards SD, Myers SL Jr, Ray P, Kim HE, Monroe K, Arteaga I Child Youth Serv Rev. 2012 Aug 1; 34(8):1480-1491

Two facts reveal a contradiction at the heart of Minnesota's child welfare system

There is no difference between races in the likelihood that a parent will abuse or neglect a child

There is a great difference between races in the likelihood that a child will be removed from home and placed in foster care.



# According to the MN Dept Of Health



Disproportionate out-of-home placement rates are not the result of poor parenting by certain ethnic groups but the outcome of multiple systems with long histories of discrimination and racist practices that enforce policies unfairly, unjustly, and unethically; while failing to provide enough supports to parents and guardians.

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/titlev/fostercare.pdf>

**Though well intentioned, many child welfare caseworkers approach their work with a predisposed cultural viewpoint and often bring stereotypes with their own subjective experiences into the helping experience.**

**Professionals who develop an awareness and sense of urgency about the need to understand the experiences of African American client families have a greater likelihood of engaging in culturally appropriate practice and interventions.**

Donna Parrish; Innovative Supervision Practices to Impact Disproportionality With African American Clients in Child Welfare



# Hennepin county 2020

**6,724 Screened in reports**

African American- 3,662  
Multiracial- 2,338

**2,566 Separations**

African American – 850  
Multiracial – 776

**250 Terminations**

African American – 105  
Multiracial - 69

# Separation Reasons

\*Out of Home Placement Report MN 2021.pdf

Substance Use 32.7 %



Neglect 13.6%



Physical Abuse 6.9%



SA 3.0 %

# We are NOT keeping children safe

Children generally suffer worse outcomes when removed than if they had been allowed to remain in marginal homes.

In studies of similarly situated children (*those with social services involvement facing possible removal*), **children who were, in fact, removed** (compared to those remaining at home):

- have two to three times higher delinquency rates
- have higher teen birth rates
- have lower earnings as adults
- are two to three times more likely to enter the criminal justice system as adults
- are twice as likely to have learning disabilities and developmental delays.
- are six times more likely to have behavioral problems.
- as adults, are more likely to have substance-related disorders, psychotic or bipolar disorders, and depression and anxiety disorders
- as adults, have arrest rates two to three times higher, and are more likely to have criminal convictions for violent offenses.

\* Trauma Caused by Separation of Children from Parents- © 2018  
\_ American Bar Association. Reproduced with permission

# Harm from Removal



## Clinical research shows that:

Children who are removed are "overwhelmed with feelings of abandonment, rejection, worthlessness, guilt, and helplessness." (Folman, 1998).

Separation floods stress hormones throughout the child's brain and body, leading to:

- difficulty sleeping, developmental regression, heart disease, hypertension, obesity,
- diabetes, and decreased longevity. (Goydarzi 2018; Eck 2018; Carnes 2018)
- permanent architectural changes in the brain, including lower IQs. (Wan 2018)
- depression, more suicide attempts, and more problems with alcohol abuse and gambling. (Wan 2018; Goydarzi 2018; Eck 2018; Carnes 2018).

Studies of youth and children who have experienced maltreatment found that:

- maltreated youth who are placed in out-of-home care had a higher risk of criminal behavior (as both juveniles or adults) compared to maltreated youth who remain at home. (Yoon, Bender & Park 2018)
- children who experience out-of-home placement due to maltreatment have an over 1.5 times higher risk of mortality between the ages of 20-56 compared to children who experience maltreatment but remain at home. (Gao, Brannstrom & Almquist 2017)

# Trauma of removal

According to national research studies; children in foster care are more likely to experience:

- Teen Pregnancy
- Adult Homelessness
- Involvement in the criminal justice system
- Unemployment
- Alcohol and or drug addiction
- Long term mental health disorders

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Common mental health disorders seen among foster care youth include:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Reactive attachment disorder
- Anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Borderline personality disorder
- Social phobia
- Oppositional defiant disorder
- Conduct disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Separation anxiety disorder
- Eating disorders

It's also common for children who have experienced foster care to engage in high-risk behaviors such as violence, substance use, and delinquency.

Adverse childhood experiences and health-risk behaviors in vulnerable early adolescents

# Why are children in foster care especially vulnerable to sex trafficking?

- Social isolation
- Less social and family support
  - Transient formal support
  - High levels of mental health diagnoses
- Children ages 12-17 overrepresented in foster care
  - Native American and African American youth disproportionately represented
- More time in care = more placements

Out of home placement has potential to:

- Disrupt what keeps a youth tied to people, places, and things
- Reduce natural protective factors that could prevent or allow quick response to missing episodes, trafficking, or exploitation

MN DHS -Seeking safety and preventing harm: Child welfare response to children and youth missing from care

Minnesota tears apart families at one of the highest rates in America – more than double the national average.

We recognize that there are still horrible stories about child abuse deaths and that is exactly the point.

All the needless removals steals time from finding the relatively few children in real danger – the worst thing Minnesota can do is to keep doubling down on its failed approach, as some have suggested.)



Everyone has a stake in ensuring Minnesota's Child Protection system is fair and equitable.

We're calling on our legislators to support the following legislative action:



# The MN African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act would serve to

- Protect Children and Strengthen Families
- Reduce the Overall Cost of Child Welfare Services and Out of Home Placement
- Reduce Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems Costs for Intervention
- Improve the Mental Health and Social Functioning of African American families and their community



# What is AAFPA

An act that declares it is the policy of this state to protect the best interests of African American and disproportionately represented children.

An act that promotes the stability and security of these families by the establishment of standards to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their homes and communities.

# Bill Overview

A responsible social services agency shall make **active efforts** to prevent the out-of-home placement of an African American or disproportionately represented child, eliminate the need for a child's removal from the child's home, and reunify an African American or disproportionately represented child with the child's family as soon as practicable.

Prior to petitioning the court to remove an African American or disproportionately represented child from the child's home, a responsible social services agency must work with the child's family to allow the child to remain in the child's home while implementing a safety plan based on the family's needs.

# Bill Overview

Prior to or within 48 hours of the removal of an African American or disproportionately represented child from the child's home, the responsible social services agency must make **active efforts** to identify and locate the child's noncustodial or nonadjudicated parent and the child's relatives to notify the child's parent and relatives that the child is, or will be, placed in foster care, and provide the child's parent and relatives with a list of legal resources.

The responsible social services agency must maintain detailed records of the agency's efforts to notify parents and relatives under this section.

# Bill Overview

The responsible social services agency must inform selected relatives and the child's parent or custodian of the difference between informal kinship care arrangements and court-ordered foster care.

If a selected relative and the child's parent or custodian request an informal kinship care arrangement for a child's placement instead of court-ordered foster care and such an arrangement will maintain the child's safety and well-being, the responsible social services agency shall comply with the request and inform the court of the plan for the child.

The court shall honor the request to forego a court-ordered foster care placement of the child in favor of an informal kinship care arrangement, unless the court determines that the request is not in the best interests of the African American or disproportionately represented child

# Bill Overview

- The responsible social services agency must make active efforts to support relatives with whom a child is placed in completing the child foster care licensure process and addressing barriers, disqualifications, or other issues affecting the relatives' licensure, including but not limited to assisting relatives with requesting reconsideration of a disqualification

# Bill Overview

Preference for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.

If an African American or disproportionately represented child cannot be returned to the child's parent, the court shall, if possible, transfer permanent legal and physical custody of the child to:

- (1) a noncustodial parent
- (2) a willing and able relative

# Bill Overview

## Termination of parental rights restrictions.

A court shall not terminate the parental rights of a parent of an African American or disproportionately represented child based solely on the parent's failure to complete case plan requirements.

A court shall not terminate the parental rights of a parent of an African American or disproportionately represented child in a child placement proceeding unless the allegations against the parent involve sexual abuse; egregious harm as defined in section 260C.007

# Bill Overview

A parent of an African American or disproportionately represented child whose parental rights have been terminated may appeal the decision within 90 days of the service of notice by the court administrator of the filing of the court's order.

# Bill Overview

## Responsible social services agency conduct.

A responsible social services agency employee who has duties related to child protection shall not knowingly:

- (1) make untrue statements about any case involving a child alleged to be in need of protection or services;
- (2) intentionally withhold any information that may be material to a case involving a child alleged to be in need of protection or services;  
or
- (3) fabricate or falsify any documentation or evidence relating to a case involving a child alleged to be in need of protection or services.

Any of the actions listed in paragraph (a) shall constitute grounds for adverse employment action.

# Bill Overview

Case review. (a) Each responsible social services agency shall conduct a review of all child protection cases handled by the agency every 24 months, after establishing a 2024 baseline.

The responsible social services agency shall report the agency's findings to the county board, related child welfare committees, the Children's Justice Initiative team, the African American Child Welfare Oversight Council, the commissioner, and community stakeholders within six months of gathering the relevant case data.

Any responsible social services agency that has a case review showing disproportionality and disparities in child welfare outcomes for African American and other disproportionately represented children and families, compared to the agency's overall outcomes, must develop a remediation plan to be approved by the commissioner.

# Bill Overview

The commissioner shall establish an African American Child Welfare Oversight Council to formulate and recommend policies and procedures relating to child welfare services for African American children to ensure that responsible social services agencies provide African American families with culturally relevant family preservation services and opportunities to care for their children safely in their homes.

# Bill Overview

The commissioner shall establish an African American Child Well-Being Unit within the Department of Human Services, to assist counties and monitor child welfare processes and outcomes to address and mitigate child welfare disparities for African American children in Minnesota.

# Bill Overview

The commissioner shall establish direct grants to organizations, service providers, and programs owned and led by African Americans and other individuals from communities disproportionately represented in the child welfare system to provide services and support for African American and disproportionately represented children and families involved in Minnesota's child welfare system, including supporting existing eligible services and facilitating the development of new services and providers, to create a more expansive network of service providers available for African American and disproportionately represented children and families.

# Bill Overview

The county attorney or a parent whose parental rights were terminated under a previous order of the court, an African American or disproportionately represented child who is ten years of age or older, the responsible social services agency, or a guardian ad litem may file a petition for the reestablishment of the legal parent and child relationship.

The court may grant the petition ordering the reestablishment of the legal parent and child relationship only if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that:

- (1) reestablishment of the legal parent and child relationship is in the child's best interests;
- (2) the child has not been adopted;
- (3) the child is not the subject of a written adoption placement agreement between the responsible social services agency and the prospective adoptive parent,
- (4) the child desires to reside with the parent;
- (5) the parent has corrected the conditions that led to an order terminating parental rights; and
- (6) the parent is willing and has the capability to provide day-to-day care and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the child

# Bill Overview

**Maintaining Connections In Foster Care Best Practices-** The commissioner of human services shall develop and publish guidance on best practices for ensuring that African American and disproportionately represented children in foster care maintain connections and relationships with their parents, custodians, and extended relative and kin network.



**The commissioner of human services shall work with the African American Child Welfare Oversight Council to establish a method to disaggregate data related to African American and other disproportionately represented children and begin disaggregating data by January 1, 2025.**



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[Preserveourfamilies.org](http://Preserveourfamilies.org)

**FB: African American Family  
Preservation Act  
FB: Village Arms**

# MN African American Family Preservation And Child Welfare Disproportionality Act



**A call for legislative action to protect children and preserve families**

## THIS ACT WILL SERVE TO

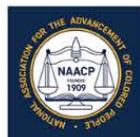
-  **Protect children and strengthen families**
-  **Reduce the cost of child welfare services and out of home placement**
-  **Reduce law enforcement and judicial systems costs for intervention**
-  **Improve the mental health and social functioning for African American and ethnic families**

**THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION STARTS FEBRUARY 12TH.**

**NOW IS THE TIME TO URGE YOUR LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION AND CHILD WELFARE DISPROPORTIONALITY ACT!**

**HELP PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FROM SYSTEMS THAT CAUSE THEM HARM. THIS ACT WILL SERVE TO ERADICATE CHILD WELFARE DISPARITIES AT EVERY DECISION POINT!**

**"We honor those who walked so we could run. We must run so our children soar. And we will not grow weary."  
Barack Obama**



## WHAT'S AT STAKE?



America has a long history of separating ethnic families. Our children are 3 times more likely than their white counterparts to be reported to child protection and 2-7 times more likely to be removed from their home, family and community. A large majority of our children are transitioning from child protection to juvenile detention centers.

## OUR MISSION



Our mission is to protect children and strengthen families. Village Arms partnered with Hennepin County to pilot the African American Family Preservation Act. More than 200 families were served under this pilot; 90% were successfully closed *without a child* removal. Scan the QR code or visit [www.villagearms.org](http://www.villagearms.org) for more information.

## COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION



Village Arms is actively working to truly protect children, and we need our community's support. Your voice is crucial in this fight. To take action, scan the QR Code or search "Who Represents Me" on Google to find your legislators. Send them an email expressing your support for this bill and make it clear that, as their constituent you believe family separation is harmful to children.

**YOUR VOTE MATTERS, SO DOES YOUR VOICE WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PUSH THIS BILL!**

# Keeping African American families whole

## Across Minnesota, inequitable representation and disparate outcomes persist for African American children in child protection systems.

African American children are more likely to experience out-of-home placement, with 5.5 times more removals from the home compared to white children in Hennepin County, and are 4.9 times more likely than white children to have a parent with parental rights terminated. This disparity comes at a significant cost to African American child well-being and family stability, as well as a financial cost. The average marginal cost for out-of-home placement in Minnesota is \$28,290, with additional costs for steps in other phases of the child welfare process<sup>1</sup>.

When our work has created or perpetuated inequity, we recognize it is our responsibility to change course. Hennepin County has supported the goals of the proposed African American Family Preservation Act since the bill was introduced in 2019. We have begun a pilot program that works towards these shared goals, as aligned with Hennepin County board direction and organizational strategy in three areas:

- **Child well-being transformation**

Hennepin County continues to transform county services and supports for children and families, especially within the child welfare system, as we build a system that proactively supports child well-being. In late 2019, a settlement agreement to a federal class action lawsuit naming Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Human Services was finalized, possible due to the hard work already underway to transform our system.

- **Disparity reduction**

Hennepin County's disparity reduction strategy focuses on improving outcomes for residents of color in the education, employment, health, housing, income, justice and transportation domains.

- **Racism as a public health crisis**

Hennepin County Board resolution 20-0242 declares racism a public health crisis. The resolution directs the county to advocate for policies to improve health outcomes for communities of color, support initiatives to dismantle systemic racism and seek partnerships with local groups with track records of confronting racism.

## Finding safe solutions to keep African American families whole

### **Pilot program: Family liaisons with Village Arms**

With the Minneapolis organization Village Arms, we are piloting a family liaison program to deliver culturally specific services to African American families involved with child protection.

Family liaisons are part of the African American community in Hennepin County, and build trust and connection with families based on that shared identity. Working in partnership with child protection social workers, family liaisons bring a cultural lens to the work.

For families, liaisons help explain the child protection system and process, so families better understand what is happening and what the possible outcomes mean for their children. Liaisons also promote the family's ideas and proposed solutions, and help families engage successfully. The pilot includes cases open for family assessment, family investigation, and ongoing case management.

In addition, liaisons work with families to help social workers build a more complete picture of a family's network of support. Identifying these relatives and kin helps us more broadly involve and surround families with the people who care about them and their children's well-being the most.

This pilot is one approach to several provisions of the African American Family Preservation Act, which aims to protect the best interest of African American children and promote stability of African American families.

## Mission and measuring success

### Mission and vision

The pilot seeks to keep African American families whole by facilitating unbiased, equitable, and culturally specific service delivery. We envision African American children thriving within their own families, community, and culture.

### Goals and evaluation

- Safely reduce the disproportionate number of African American children removed from home or re-entering foster care
- Increase frequency and timeliness of reunification for African American children
- Increase the number of African American children placed with non-custodial parents or relatives when out of home placement is the only viable safety option
- Reduce the number of repeat maltreatment determinations for African American children and decrease the number of African American cases opened for child protection case management

To evaluate the pilot, we are measuring outcomes using SSIS data, manual tracking, and family surveys.

## Timeline and milestones

- Three-year pilot, 2020-2023
- Family liaisons hired third quarter 2020
- Case assignment began fourth quarter 2020

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Management and Budget. (2018). *Child Welfare Inventory and Benefit-Cost Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/results-first/child-welfare-report.pdf>



**MN AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION AND CHILD WELFARE  
DISPROPORTIONALITY ACT  
TO  
STOP THE ARBITRARY REMOVAL OF CHILDREN BY MINNESOTA'S CHILD  
PROTECTION SYSTEM**

**|Senate Author- Champion | House Author- Agbaje  
SF 716 | HF 912**

Minnesota's African American youth are removed from their homes at an alarming rate and a large number are crossing over from child protection into the juvenile justice system. **Racial disparities are found in the entire process; from initial reporting, screening, and assessment to discharge from the system.**

Minnesota's child protection system relies heavily upon child removal as a **first response** to ethnic families. Although family separation is **not** an evidence-based practice. In fact, the research and overall statistical outcomes for foster youth **prove** that separation **does not** keep children safe, it does the opposite.

The likelihood of incarceration increases, the risks of substance use, homelessness, lack of education, mental health disorders, generational problems, and sex trafficking are all **significantly higher** for young people that have been in foster care than their counterparts that did not experience a removal. Family separation is the precursor for poor outcomes in all of these areas.

The child protection reform that began under the orders of Governor Dayton **failed** to address disproportionality, unequal treatment and poor child welfare outcomes for African American and other ethnic families. On the contrary, the governor's task force recommendations lead to a 50% increase in the removal of African American children from their homes. The perpetual clogging of our child protection system with children that are **not** at risk of harm leads to case worker overload, a significant decrease in foster home availability and a nonsensical increase in state spending while leaving children **truly** in need of protection, vulnerable and at risk.

We all know that healthy families are vital to the success of our children and ultimately, our state. Everyone has a stake in ensuring Minnesota's Child Protection system is fair and equitable. Help us address the injustice faced by these families through your support of the AAFPA.

## THE MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION ACT WOULD SERVE TO:

- ✚ Protect Children and Strengthen Families
- ✚ Reduce the Overall Cost of Child Welfare Services and Out of Home Placement
- ✚ Reduce Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems Costs for Intervention
- ✚ Improve the Mental Health and Social Functioning of African American Children
- ✚ Improve the Child Protection Department's Efficacy

### CLOSER LOOK:

- African American children are over 3 times more likely than their white counterparts to be **reported to child protection**
- Parents of African American children facing less serious allegations than their white counterparts remain **2-7 times more likely** to have their children removed
- According to county and state data, White parents, facing the same or more egregious allegations, are more likely to receive services that allow their children to *remain in the home* while African American children are **removed** from theirs
- African American families are assigned to the family investigation path for **discretionary** reasons at significantly higher rates than White families
- The family investigation track is more **punitive**, it can involve the court and a maltreatment finding. This finding may cause a loss of employment and/or housing. This impacts the family's long-term wellbeing while increasing their likelihood of future child protection involvement
- The rights of African American parents are terminated at higher rates. African American and children of 2 or more races are 3-5 times more likely than White children to become a **state ward**
- African American and children of two or more races are **least likely** to be adopted before the age of 18
- African American children are the **highest population** of children moving from child protection to juvenile detention (foster care to prison pipeline)

The Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act would (1) protect the best interests of African American and disproportionately represented children and (2) promote the stability and security of families by establishing minimum standards to prevent the unnecessary removal. The Act would work to address disparities at **every decision point** while providing oversight and accountability to the child protection workforce. Let's do our part to ensure ALL children have the opportunity to thrive. Extend your support today!

DOCTORS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD  
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**Chair Rep Jamie Becker-Finn**

MN House of Representatives Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee

MN House of Representatives, St Paul, MN

Dear Chair Becker-Finn, Vice Chair Frazier, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this support letter for HF 912 (Rep Agbaje), The African American Family Protection Act. I am a retired practicing pediatrician and member of Doctors for Early Childhood (D4EC), an education and advocacy group, formed in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder.

Doctors for Early Childhood strongly urge you to pass HF 912. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), of which D4EC are members, developed a position paper in 2021 at the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The paper reported on studies showing large disparities in how child welfare laws and their application, at both the federal and state levels, disadvantage poor people in general and people of color in particular. While the Pandemic exacerbated these effects, the Pandemic did not cause them. Startlingly, one study “revealed 4.9% of white children will enter the system while 11% of African American children and 15.4% of Native American children will experience foster care in their lifetime”.(1)

The AAP urges prompt state and federal reforms to address these disparities, their underlying root causes and downstream effects of often unnecessary family disruption and separation, the generational trauma caused, and the need for family supports. For the first time, recognizing the importance of having people with lived experience be integral to the development of AAP policy, a panel of such diverse members was convened leading to these AAP recommendations.

Please pass HF 912 so African American Families can heal, and their children can thrive.

Sincerely,

Dale Dobrin, MD, FAAP

Ada Alden, EdD

Mary Meland, MD, FAAP

Roger Sheldon, MD, FAAP

Together, Doctors for Early Childhood

(1) Reimagining Child Welfare: Recommendations for Public Policy Change; [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

April 5, 2024

Chair Representative Jamie Becker-Finn (40B)

Vice Chair: Rep. Cedrik Frazier (43A)

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee,

My name is Victor Obisakin. I write in support of (HF. 912) (Agbaje), the African American Family Preservation Act aka Layla Jackson Law. I write to you as a concerned Minnesotan, Immigrant, and Father. I am not here to throw numbers and facts at you all because I feel people have done that already. I am just very concerned about what is going on with our children.

I've heard testifiers and stories of children removed from their parents because there is a flaw in our system. Removed because people don't have the basic knowledge of the family system and culture. Removed because of the lack of humanity in people. These are children we are talking about. There are major ramifications when things about culture such as food, language, music, and clothes are taken away from our children, a part of them dies. Their community is now affected. They now become foreign to a new world, leaving the culture they've known all their lives behind. This is mentally and physically damaging. Children who are or will be traumatized because they are in a foster home that would not even relate to the culture they were removed from. These families and children deserve better. This law will address the racial disparities that exist within the child protection system.

We are a family-minded culture, and we must fight and take care of our children. Keeping family together is important. I am a big supporter of mental health, so this Bill improves the mental health and social functioning of African American children. The fact that barriers are going to be identified and parents and children now have access to culturally informed mental health and substance abuse services and treatment is huge.

I do ask that you please pass the Layla Jackson Law.

Thank you.

Victor Obisakin

St. Paul, MN

obivik84@gmail.com

April 9, 2024

Representative Becker-Finn, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
559 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 912 – Layla Jackson Law - the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (MAAFPA)

Dear Representative Becker-Finn and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) thank Representative Agbaje for authoring HF 912, the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (MAAFPA) and are supportive of the goal of the MAAFPA to protect the best interests of African American children. With this in mind, we are concerned that implementation of the law will not be successful without substantial investments in the following areas: workforce, programs and services, training, and technology. We estimate that this legislation will result in 80 – 85% of cases requiring Active Efforts, significantly stressing an already under-resourced system. These concerns and an example of a relatively common situation with reasonable and active efforts illustrated is detailed in an addendum.

We value the tireless work of legislative leaders, advocates and the many others involved, to address inequities in Minnesota's child welfare system that have led to an over representation of African Americans in the system. Counties recognize the urgency around addressing racial disparities in the child welfare system. Fundamentally, we believe all children have the right to be safe and protected from maltreatment, abuse and neglect.

The child protection system is one of the most complex social systems in our society, governed by both federal and state policy, involving a myriad of partners including law enforcement, judges, attorneys, child welfare workers and community partners. In Minnesota's county administered system, counties stress the importance of acknowledging the role that each entity serves in ensuring the successful implementation of AAFPA, including the unique role that Minnesota counties play in program development and financing of active efforts. If the necessary investments aren't made by our state leaders, county levies will be impacted across our 87 counties.

In times of program scarcity, increased mental health and substance use needs, workforce shortages and woefully inadequate information systems it is critical to make data informed investments that are culturally responsive, and family centered while also fostering more partnership and coordination between systems. Without significant investment in culturally responsive programming, our county-based child welfare workforce, and the modernization of technology systems, we are concerned that that MAAFPA will not be successfully implemented, and that disproportionality will be further exacerbated.

We strongly support developing increased capacity in the child welfare system to deliver more intensive home-based services and wrap around services, establish community-based supports such as

Community Resource Centers (CRC's), and ensure kinship programming is resourced. Furthermore, we encourage lawmakers to be mindful of the impact of this law on the workforce – Minnesota's county-based child welfare workforce is fragile and experiences high rates of turnover, all of which are compounded by overly burdensome administrative requirements and an archaic technology infrastructure. Implementation of this law will require that county-based staff have the time, resources, technology, and training needed to ensure successful implementation of the law.

As legislators take important steps to address racial disparities in the child welfare system, we strongly encourage utilizing data to inform decision making – and investments in the areas of training, education, processes, programs, services, and system technologies to correspond with any policy changes. We implore legislators to ensure investments are made available throughout each of Minnesota's 87 counties and are funded in an equitable and sustainable manner, with the state as a partner in ensuring program viability.

Sincerely,



Angie Thies - Child Wellbeing Policy Analyst, Association of Minnesota Counties

Cc: Representative Agbaje, Assistant Majority Leader

Attachment

HF 912 – AMC and MACSSA Identified Needs for Successful Implementation

*AMC and MACSSA remain committed to working with lawmakers and our state agency partners to address racial disparities that exist within the child protection system.*

- Research indicates that time spent supporting a family is a predictor of successful family outcomes. The existing workforce will struggle to keep up with the demands of implementing the Act, while also meeting the existing administrative and paperwork demands, thereby requiring the need for additional staffing at the local level to support case reviews and administrative requirements, while remaining focused on serving children, youth and families.
- MACSSA share's concerns raised by the Minnesota County Attorneys' Association regarding the Act's impact on achieving permanency for the youth.
- Current funding is inadequate and unsustainable at the local level to fully implement active efforts as called for in the Act. Furthermore, we have significant concerns that if any or all of the Act faces legal challenges, federal revenue such as Title IVE will be jeopardized, ultimately impacting the financial stability of our system and program/service sustainability.
- The application of language that would apply the Act to any child disproportionately represented in the system creates the need to clarify how we define this category, how eligibility is determined, what culturally appropriate services are, and what the local capacity is to meet the staffing and service needs throughout the Minnesota.
- We are concerned that the passage and implementation of the Act will further stress (potentially break) the existing technology system SSIS. Technology supports, including a comprehensive child welfare data system that is CCWIS compliant to foster reporting and data keeping requirements is critical to support the Act. Notably, without investing in technology supports, redaction, reviews and the qualitative assessment are largely manual processes and require significant amounts of staff time.
- The Act will necessitate increased training capacity and resourcing at the state and local level, including expanded utilization of collaborative safety with attention focused on ensuring that regardless of leadership changes or staffing turnover, that staff across Minnesota have access to consistent and real time training and supports to foster culturally responsive relationships and practice with families. Additionally, the need for sustained equity programming and funding that builds relationships between the state, counties and community is critical to fostering environments that are family, youth and culturally responsive. We have made strides in the past years in our work with the Equity Partnership and would like to see this work continue in a thoughtful, deliberate, and sustained manner, especially as we consider changes in state agency formation.

*SF 716/HF 912 require active efforts be applied to individuals of African American descent and all populations that are disproportionately represented in Minnesota's child protection system. An example of active efforts in comparison to reasonable efforts is provided below. Reasonable efforts is the present standard for all cases where MIFPA/ICWA do not apply.*

**Reasonable Efforts:**

In the early stages of this case, the worker and parents meet to discuss how to achieve this goal. The worker will inquire if the parents have an existing or prior relationship with a mental health professional for whom they'd wish to continue. If so, the worker will ask the parents to set up or continue appointments among other coordinating activities. If not, the worker will provide the parent with a list of local/regional mental health providers. The worker will ask the parents to make calls, select a provider, complete any paperwork, and schedule appointments. The worker will inquire if there are any barriers for the parents to independently complete these tasks and attempt to address those barriers by exploring alternatives. A barrier example is that the parents need transportation. The worker will provide them with ideas (i.e. phone number to their health plan to get a ride; suggest they find a relative, friend or neighbor who can help; provide bus schedules). When the worker regularly meets with the parents, they will check on their progress on this goal which will include continuing to discuss barriers and providing ideas on how to overcome them. Sometimes if the steps are not being pursued, the worker may break down the steps more simply and check-in more frequently on goal attainment.

**Active Efforts:**

As with reasonable efforts much of the work is the same as described above. Workers will rely on the preferences of the parents as to whom they wish to receive these services. Active efforts could result in the worker making the calls, filling out the paperwork and setting up appointments alongside the family, with the parent's permission. To overcome the transportation barrier, active efforts could result in the agency providing gas cards/vouchers, making several calls to find a ride or to drive the parents themselves to their appointments. Given the distance and frequency to access culturally specific services (currently such services are not locally available to all counties), this could mean the worker is spending half to a full day transporting the parents to weekly therapy. As a result, the other families on the worker's caseload will experience delays in response times and action for their own needs.

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T H E M I N N E S O T A  
C O U N T Y A T T O R N E Y S  
A S S O C I A T I O N

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April 8, 2024

Rep. Ester Agbaje  
437 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF0912 Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act

Rep. Agbaje:

Thank you for meeting with representatives from the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA) and the opportunity to provide additional feedback and discuss possible amendments to HF 912 which addresses both important and complex issues.

MCAA strongly supports the effort to reduce disparities in the child protection system and keep child safety at the forefront of our work. We offered to share suggestions to some of the child safety and permanency concerns we discussed. We also appreciate your recent amendments regarding exceptions to safety planning. Below are further suggestions we hope you will consider as you move forward with this legislation.

1. We recommend amending the definition of “best interests of the African American or disproportionately represented child” to include language that the best interest of the child may require out of home placement. Specifically, in line 3.3, the following could be added at the end of the sentence: “or to support an out of home placement.”
2. We recommend that the qualifiers “safe” or “safely” and/or “in the child’s best interests” be added to the language for placements with a noncustodial parent or relative. The word “safely” could be added to line 9.22 so that a noncustodial or non-adjudicated parent is “willing and able to safely provide daily care...” Similar language could be added to line 14.1, so that a transfer of custody is made to “a safe, willing and able relative...” Adding this language will keep the safety of the child as a focus if the child must be placed out of the home.
3. Finally, to address some of the safety issues we discussed where serious physical or sexual abuse or psychosocial harm could be harmful to visitation situations, we recommend language be added at the end of line 22.8 to include “if visitation is in the best interests of child” which could address these concerns.

MCCA also strongly supports permanency being established for children in a timely manner and including families in planning regarding what type of permanency is in the best interests of the child and who the proposed permanent caregivers may be. We recognize that while a preference for a transfer of custody may be appropriate in some situations, there are situations where a

**100 Empire Drive, Suite 200 • St. Paul, MN 55103 • 6 5 1-6 4 1-1 6 0 0 • Fax: 6 5 1-6 4 1-1 6 6 6**

**[www.mcaa-mn.org](http://www.mcaa-mn.org)**

termination of parental rights is in a child's best interests. As such, we recommend the following modifications for your consideration:

1. We had a good discussion about allowing termination of parental rights to occur in additional scenarios other than just cases involving egregious harm or sexual abuse as well as allowing relatives who have a preference for what type of permanency will work best of their family and the child. We suggest deleting the language on restrictions on termination of parental rights in lines 14.8-14.32 and adding language to strengthen the preference for a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody. Such language could be: "A transfer of permanent legal and physical custody is the preferred permanency option for an African American or disproportionately represented child who cannot return home." This language could be added somewhere in lines 13.26-13.29.
2. We also had a good discussion about some compromise between the current four-year waiting period before a parent whose rights have been terminated could petition for reestablishment of their parental rights or the immediate ability to petition currently in the bill. We propose that a child must have been in foster care for at least **36** months before a parent can bring such a petition.

Changes in the areas noted above would go a long way toward providing the necessary public safety safeguards for some of the situations we see in the child protection system while providing more protections and options for families.

While we continue to have concerns about the constitutionality of the language and the resources needed for implementation, we will continue to consider the implications and provide suggestions or other ideas as we are able.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, given the anticipated comprehensive changes to the child welfare practice in Minnesota this bill will bring forward and to ensure that counties and the state are prepared to best serve families with the structure and financial support required for implementation, we ask you to consider a delayed effective date. This will allow all stakeholders to adequately prepare for these changes.

Thank you again for meeting with us and considering our suggestions and concerns. We value the opportunity to collaborate on this bill and we would like to continue to do so during this legislative session or in the future should additional work need to be done on this bill.

Sincerely,



Robert Small  
Executive Director



Erin Johnson  
Assistant Washington Cty Atty  
MCAA Juvenile Law Comm.



Christos Jensen  
Assistant Ramsey Cty Atty  
Co-Chair, MCAA Juv. Law Comm.

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<sup>1</sup> This letter supplements the MCAA letter dated March 18, 2024.



**An association of resources and advocacy for children, youth and families**  
[www.aspiremn.org](http://www.aspiremn.org)

March 19, 2024

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee,

Please receive this letter of support for HF912, the African American Family Preservation Act.

AspireMN is a statewide associate 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.

Community-based provider organizations believe HF912 can improve Minnesota's ongoing disparities and address the disproportionate representation of African American children in foster care. This act intends to provide fundamental improvements to the child welfare system while improving family preservation within African American communities.

We encourage the committee to support HF912 and continue to name this important proposal as a critical step forward to improving child welfare in Minnesota.

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

April 8, 2024

**Chair Jamie Becker-Finn**  
**House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law**  
559 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Vice Chair Cedrick Frazier**  
**House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law**  
439 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/Agbaje and SF716/Champion)**

Chair Becker-Finn, Vice Chair Frazier, and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage was created by the Minnesota Legislature to advise government on the needs of our constituent communities. Thank you for scheduling a hearing on the African American Family Preservation Act (AAFPA). and urge you pass. **Our Council urges the Committee's full support of the AAFP to ensure the bill's successful movement through the legislative process this year.**

Black children are overrepresented at every stage of child protection services (CPS). Black children are multiple times more likely to be reported to CPS, contacted by CPS, and removed from their families by CPS. This overrepresentation means that Black children and families are disproportionately burdened by the impacts of police surveillance and punitive actions in the child welfare system. Our communities are also impacted by the short-term and long-term harms of child removal and family separation. The data shows that out-of-home placement increases a child's vulnerability to numerous developmental and societal problems<sup>1</sup>.

It is impossible to overstate the level of hardship and trauma our communities are experiencing around the issue of child welfare disparities. Our Council has consulted with African Heritage community leaders, including Black legislators and other elected officials, about community concerns and the pathways for meaningful steps forward. We offer the following recommendations:

- 1) **Address the real challenges that Black children and families face within the child welfare system.** Child welfare disproportionality is a matter of civil rights and a problem of bad science

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<sup>1</sup> On Black overrepresentation in child protection, see data compiled in NAACP Minneapolis's recent [formal complaint](#). Also see this [MN DHS report](#) on 2022 data. For more about the harmful impacts of child welfare disproportionality, see MIT's major studies on the harm of removal: [Child Protection & Child Outcomes](#) (2007); [Child Protection & Adult Crime](#) (2008); [Causal Effects of Foster Care](#) (2013). Also see the [ABA's resource](#) summarizing extensive research in this field. For discussion of the role of poverty in child removal and the importance of prevention in child welfare, see this [systematic review](#) of 4+ decades of research as well as this [synthesis of studies](#) by researchers at Boston University.

and poor practice. The Legislature must make laws that arrest bad public practices. Our communities need public finance and policy resources that can scale up good practice and science in the child welfare system.

- 2) **Prioritize, pass, and sign the African American Family Preservation Act into state law.** The AAFPA is based on good science, and its emphasis on prevention aligns with best practices for protecting children and families. Its provisions would benefit African American, African Immigrant, and other children and families impacted by child welfare disproportionality. Because of the gravity and reach of this issue among Minnesotans of African Heritage, the support for the bill runs across cultural and geographic boundaries. As demonstrated by letters and testimonies during legislative hearings, the bill has organizational support from African American and African Immigrant communities, including East African and West African organizations. The support includes organizations in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota.

Our deepest gratitude to Representative Agbaje and Senator Champion for their leadership on this bill. We also commend the House Judiciary's commitments to address the problem of structural racism as it impacts African Heritage Minnesotans and other underserved communities in our judiciary and civil law systems. We urge the Committee to act now on the above recommendations.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director | [Linda.Sloan1@state.mn.us](mailto:Linda.Sloan1@state.mn.us)

Theodore Rose | Policy Director | [Theo.Rose@state.mn.us](mailto:Theo.Rose@state.mn.us)

Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

*The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:*

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule, or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*

From: **DFL Feminist Caucus**

Date: Wed, Mar 13, 2024 at 10:56 AM

**Letter of Support: African American Family Protection Act**

African American Family Preservation Act Support

The DFL Feminist Caucus strongly supports the African American Family Preservation Act (HF 1151 Agbaje/SF 843 Champion). The DFL Feminist Caucus continues to support, advocate and promote the health, safety, human rights, and improved socioeconomic and political conditions of all people in their life and communities through the elimination of sexism in accordance with the Principles of the Caucus

While there has been much progress in eliminating racial disparities, there remains a long road ahead to a society free of unjust discrimination. One of the most shocking disparities in Minnesota is the disparate outcome for African American children in state child protection systems. Not only are African American families more likely to be the subject of child protection interventions, but they are more likely to be separated by the state during the process. This unequal treatment comes at a high cost to African American children and families.

The DFL Feminist Caucus supports the African American Family Protection Act to address this long-standing inequity. The Act would prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families by establishing minimum standards that consider children's best interests. It would also create an African American Child Welfare Advisory Council and an African American Child Wellbeing Department within the Department of Human Services. In addressing the needs of African American families, cases would be reviewed by a specialist in the disproportionate use of child welfare laws. The Act would also require competency training in African American culture for child protection workers.

The African American Family Preservation Act aims to protect the best interest of African American children and promote the stability of African American families. Therefore, the DFL Feminist Caucus strongly supports the legislature to pass it.



**EVOLVE**  
Family Services

Phone 651.439.2446  
Fax 651.439.2071  
E-mail [Evolve@EvolveServices.org](mailto:Evolve@EvolveServices.org)  
Web [EvolveServices.org](http://EvolveServices.org)

*Growing Families  
Enriching Lives*

March 19, 2024

Re: African American Family Preservation Act - HF0912

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee,

I am writing in support of the African American Family Preservation Act (HF0912) as the Executive Director of EVOLVE Family Services. Our agency has been providing child-centered family services in Minnesota for over 46 years, and since 2016, has been a leader in providing Kinship Foster Care services for children and families involved in the child welfare system. Since 2016, we have served over 650 children in relative placements. Of the youth we are presently serving, 78% are children of color; 27% specifically identifying as Black, and 24% identifying as multiracial with a majority having Black heritage. While we are thankful these children are with relatives, the fact that there are so many children with African American heritage facing out-of-home care is extremely concerning.

In addition to our Kinship program, EVOLVE has operated UMOJA MN since 2015. Our Black Heritage Camps and support programs aim to connect African American children who are experiencing out-of-home care with their community and heritage to support the development of positive Black identity, while working to equip caregivers to meet their social, emotional and cultural needs. To date we have served over 1,500 children through this program. Many of these youth, from all over the state of Minnesota, have been placed into white, non-relative families. Our last Black Heritage Camp held in January 2024 had 266 registrants, with some families turned away for lack of space. While we feel it is vital to provide these important services, the simple fact that this program has such a high need to exist in our state indicates a very serious problem.

These appalling statistics against the backdrop of consistently high disproportionality and disparities for Black families in the Minnesota child welfare system are long overdue for meaningful legislative intervention. This overrepresentation underscores an even greater importance in keeping children within their family systems whenever safe and practically possible. The African American Family Preservation Act will work to protect the best interest of Black children and promote the security, stability, and well-being of African American children and families. Thank you for your prioritization and support of HF 0912.

Sincerely,

Susannah Barnes, LSW, CSW  
Executive Director

*Dedicated to a world where everyone has nurturing, permanent, and supportive familial relationships.*

**EVOLVE Family Services**  
5850 Omaha Avenue North  
Stillwater MN 55082



To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chair Melissa Wiklund and Committee Members,

I am reaching out to request your support of the **Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/SF716)**, authored by Senator Champion and Rep Agbaje.

Child welfare disproportionality is a long standing, egregious and well-documented issue that continues to plague the state of Minnesota. African American children are removed from their homes, families, and communities at alarming rates. A large majority are moving from child protection to juvenile detention (foster care to prison pipeline). In addition, the overall statistical outcomes for foster youth are troubling. The likelihood of justice system involvement increases as related to the number of placements a youth has experienced. The risks of substance use, housing insecurity, lack of education, generational problems, and sex trafficking are significantly higher for young people that have been in foster care than their counterparts that did not experience out-of-home placement.

Research shows us that children fare better both in the short and long term when they are provided economic and safety services within their own families. We have an obligation to ensure a child's well -being by preserving their familial connections. We urge you to support this bill and keep families safely together.

The MN African American Family Preservation Act would serve to:

- Protect children and strengthen families
- Reduce the cost of child welfare services and out of home placement
- Reduce law enforcement and judicial systems costs for intervention
- Improve the mental health and social functioning for African American children
- Improve the child protection department efficacy

The cost of removal to the state is exponentially higher than it would be to temporarily provide in-home support to a NON-ABUSIVE family that may be facing hardships related to poverty. Minnesota pays upwards of 25k per child to place the child in foster care while family preservation and in home services costs under 5k.

Everyone has a stake in ensuring our child protection system is fair and equitable. As your constituent, it is my hope that the issues this bill seeks to address are a high concern. Thank you in advance for your time, service, and support of this bill!

Respectfully,

*Mariama Secka Touray*

Mariama Secka Touray

President, The Gambian Association in Minnesota

Phone: 763 269 9710. Email: [president@mingam.org](mailto:president@mingam.org)

Address: 3315 2<sup>nd</sup> St N, Minneapolis, MN 55412

Email: [info@mingam.org](mailto:info@mingam.org)

HENNEPIN COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 14, 2024

Chair Melissa Wiklund, Health and Human Services Committee  
2107 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Ave. W  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

Thank you for your consideration of SF 716. We are grateful to Senator Champion for carrying this important legislation and urge your support.

Several years ago, Hennepin County made historic investments and systems changes in our child well-being work. We have seen the positive impact that our Parent Support Outreach Program, TeenHOPE Program, Connect for School Success, and other prevention-based programs have on families. However, racial disparities still exist within our systems. The next stage of our transformation in Children and Family Services will be guided by a strategic plan shaped by many voices within, across, and outside our system. Countywide, we're operationalizing our disparity reduction strategy with services shaped by our community's voice and decisions driven by data.

The African American Family Preservation Act is a critical step to reduce the shameful racial disparities Minnesota continues to see in our child protection system.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Irene Fernando  
Board Chair

**Irene Fernando, Chair**  
**Hennepin County Board of Commissioners**  
300 South Sixth Street, Minneapolis, MN 55487-0040  
hennepinD2.com | hennepin.us





**IMMIGRANT DEVELOPMENT CENTER**  
Uniting Dreams, Building Communities

Immigrant Development Center  
810 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Suite 100  
Moorhead, MN 56560

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To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Chair Melissa Wiklund and committee members,

My name is Fowzia Adde and I am the Executive Director of the Immigrant Development Center, a nonprofit serving East African and West African immigrant communities in Moorhead, Minnesota. I am writing to urge your strong support for the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/SF716).

As an advocate working directly with African immigrant families navigating the child welfare system, I see firsthand how cultural and language barriers lead to the unnecessary removal of children from loving homes at alarming rates. African immigrant parents are not more likely to abuse or neglect their children. Yet time and again, I witness how misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences result in the traumatic separation of families.

One recent case exemplifies this tragic pattern. James, a Nigerian father, was arrested and charged with felony domestic violence for disciplining his 11-year-old daughter after she engaged in inappropriate behavior at school. The school had complained about bullying and the mother told James to "beat her and discipline her." James resorted to physical discipline, a practice accepted in his culture, out of desperation to correct his daughter's behavior. Neighbors misunderstood his actions and called the police. Now James faces prison, and his daughter faces foster care - though she was never in danger.

This heartbreaking situation illustrates how child protection's cultural incompetence is shattering immigrant families. With no understanding of African disciplinary norms, a father's attempt to parent is criminalized. With no support to overcome language barriers, an immigrant family cannot advocate for itself against a system stacked against them.

The provisions of the African American Family Preservation Act would protect families like James' by:

- Requiring active efforts to provide culturally-appropriate services to prevent out-of-home placement
- Incorporating economic supports into safety plans to mitigate poverty-related neglect
- Empowering the reestablishment of parental rights when in the child's best interest
- Establishing oversight to address systemic issues leading to disproportionality for African American and African immigrant children



**IMMIGRANT DEVELOPMENT CENTER**  
Uniting Dreams, Building Communities

Immigrant Development Center  
810 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Suite100  
Moorhead, MN 56560

On behalf of the East African and West African communities I serve, I implore you to pass this critical legislation. The arbitrary removal of African children from their homes is a devastating form of modern oppression that we have a moral obligation to stop. By supporting families, we can end the punitive practices disproportionately harming communities of color.

The true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable. Let us live up to our values by reforming our child welfare system to keep African American and African immigrant children safe with their families, where they have the best opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your service and your support,

Fowzia Adde  
Executive Director  
Immigrant Development Center



Institute to  
**Transform  
Child Protection**

Mitchell Hamline School of Law  
875 Summit Avenue, Room 254  
Saint Paul, MN 55105-3076

phone 651.290.8653  
fax 651.290.6407

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Sen. Melissa H. Wiklund  
Minnesota Senate  
Chairperson, Health and Human Services Committee  
503 State Office Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: African American Family Preservation Act

Chair Sen. Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Mitchell Hamline School of Law Institute to Transform Child Protection, we write in support of SF716. The African American Family Preservation Act (AAFPA) would promote the stability and wellbeing of African American families in Minnesota by preventing unnecessary removal of African American children and other children of color from their families.

As advocates for families in court and through legislative reform, we at the Institute to Transform Child Protection understand that it is critical that children in Minnesota have family and relationship stability, in particular children of color who are more often impacted by the trauma of child protection involvement. African American children and other children of color are removed from their families in child protection cases at alarmingly disparate rates compared to white children. This disproportionately high rate of removal does not allow for African American and other children of color to foster their familial, community, and cultural ties, and it creates a sense of distrust between the child protection system and those communities.

In our experience representing parents and family members going through the child protection system, we have heard numerous firsthand accounts from African American clients regarding adverse experiences with, and removal resulting from, child protection involvement. We have also encountered numerous relatives of African American children being unable to provide relative care due to barriers to foster care provider licensure. We have seen a system in which African American children are disproportionately removed from their immediate families and their extended relatives face disproportionate barriers to providing them interim care.

We ask that members of the committee vote in favor of SF716.

Sincerely,

Institute to Transform Child Protection

Mitchell Hamline School of Law Child Protection Clinic



*\*Building a stronger Nigerian Community in the State of Minnesota\**

March 14, 2024

To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chair Melissa Wiklund and Committee Members,

We are reaching out to request your support of the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (**HF912/SF716**), authored by Senator Champion and Rep Agbaje.

Child welfare disproportionality is a long standing, egregious and well-documented issue that continues to plague the state of Minnesota. African American children are removed from their homes, families, and communities at alarming rates. A large majority are moving from child protection to juvenile detention (foster care to prison pipeline). In addition, the overall statistical outcomes for foster youth are troubling. The likelihood of justice system involvement increases as related to the number of placements a youth has experienced. The risks of substance use, housing insecurity, lack of education, generational problems, and sex trafficking are significantly higher for young people that have been in foster care than their counterparts that did not experience out-of-home placement.

Research shows us that children fare better both in the short and long term when they are provided economic and safety services within their own families. We have an obligation to ensure a child's well-being by preserving their familial connections. We urge you to support this bill and keep families safely together.

**The MN African American Family Preservation Act would serve to:**

- Protect children and strengthen families
- Reduce the cost of child welfare services and out of home placement
- Reduce law enforcement and judicial systems costs for intervention
- Improve the mental health and social functioning for African American children
- Improve the child protection department efficacy

The cost of removal to the state is exponentially higher than it would be to temporarily provide in-home support to a NON-ABUSIVE family that may be facing hardships related to poverty.

Minnesota pays upwards of 25k per child to place the child in foster care while family preservation and in home services costs under 5k.

The perpetual clogging of our child protection system with children that are not at risk of harm has helped to exhaust county and state resources. This has led to case worker overload, a

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612.235.0038 | [info@mindmn.org](mailto:info@mindmn.org) | [www.mindmn.org](http://www.mindmn.org)**



*\*Building a stronger Nigerian Community in the State of Minnesota\**

significant decrease in foster home availability and a nonsensical increase in state spending while leaving children truly in need of protection, vulnerable and at risk.

Everyone has a stake in ensuring our child protection system is fair and equitable. As your constituent, it is my hope that the issues this bill seeks to address are a high concern. Thank you in advance for your time, service, and support of this bill!

Respectfully,

MIND Organization

March 19, 2024

**RE: HF 912 | African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act**

Dear Chair Pinto, Vice Chair Keeler, and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee,

The Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) has a statutorily required mandate to investigate decisions, acts, and other matters related to the health, safety, and welfare of youth in foster care to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice for youth who are in the care of the state. OOFY was created through legislation in the 2022 session based on advocacy and testimony by current and former Fosters. These Fosters were seeking a mechanism for more oversight and accountability, based on their experiences of abuse, neglect, discrimination or exploitation at the hands of our very own child protection systems. Our office is still in its infancy. We have a goal of opening the office in the next two months, to receive complaints, questions, and concerns from and on behalf of Fosters, and to seek appropriate resolution using a Credible Review Process.

OOFY supports the provisions of HF 912 and it's aims to better support family preservation and culturally centered case planning and services. Research, as well as collective stories from people with lived experience in foster care, tell us clearly that removal of children from their parent(s) is traumatic and has a lifelong impact, and that placement and ongoing connections with a child's family helps mitigate the trauma. HF 912 aims to require more creativity, more planning, more family and community involvement, and more intentionality before making such impactful decisions.

OOFY also supports the increased accountability measures included in HF 912 to ensure our child welfare system is on track to address the unacceptable disproportionality of African, African American, and other disproportionately over-represented communities. Data shows us that despite awareness of and attention to our state's disproportionality in child welfare, we have struggled to make meaningful progress, for years and decades. H.F. 912 provides our systems a roadmap for urgent and thoughtful action. It aligns with the priorities outlined in the One Minnesota Plan ([One Minnesota Plan / One Minnesota Plan \(mn.gov\)](#)): "In all of our work, we will seek to end discrimination and eliminate disparities for people of color and Indigenous community members, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people with disabilities, immigrants, and people in all zip codes and of all economic statuses."

HF 912 may seem overwhelming and will require significant financial investment that may understandably concern many lawmakers. As you consider this bill, "Do the right thing, even when it's difficult" is a relevant guiding principle of the One Minnesota Plan to consider. We thank the co-authors and community advocates of this important bill who continue to ask us to "do the right thing" to effectively address disproportionality in our complex child welfare system.

Sincerely,



Ombudsperson for Foster Youth  
651-946-2941  
Misty.coonce@state.mn.us



## MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair  
Health and Human Services  
March 15, 2024

Chair Wiklund and Health and Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN), we are writing in support of SF0716, the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act.

NASW-MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing about 2000 social workers. Our members work in a wide variety of settings, including direct practice (clinical and non-clinical) and macro practice. While the populations served by social workers vary greatly, many are impacted by children and families interacting with the child protection system.

The Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act aligns with NASW-MN's priorities to support every child growing up in a nurturing and safe environment. We recognize the disproportionate presence of African American children and families in the child protection system, and the long-term harm it causes when we focus on separation and punishment. Instead, we advocate for trauma-responsive policies that foster participation, restoration, safety, and resilience.

We believe that transforming current practices is necessary to prevent harm within families and the recurrent trauma in foster care. Therefore, we support the diligence and oversight that this bill specifies. If children cannot remain with their parents, we want to ensure every effort is made to locate other family members or kin. We also appreciate establishing a case review system and gathering data so we can be more specific in our reforms and intentional in our response to families who need support. Finally, as licensed social workers who are required to maintain current best practice through continuing education, we understand the importance of specific training for staff working with African American families.

Though daunting, SF0716 provides an important roadmap toward transformational change in our child protection system. We appreciate your service and work on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen E. Goodenough". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Karen E. Goodenough, PhD, LGSW  
Executive Director  
NASW-MN

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Arneson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jenny Arneson, MSW, LGSW  
Legislative Consultant  
NASW-MN

**NATIONAL COALITION FOR  
CHILD PROTECTION REFORM**

**53 Skyhill Road (Suite 202) / Alexandria, Virginia, 22314  
(703) 212-2006 / (703) 380-4252 / [info@nccpr.info](mailto:info@nccpr.info) / [www.nccpr.org](http://www.nccpr.org) / @NCCPR**

**To: Minnesota House of Representatives, Committee on Children and Families**

**From: Richard Wexler, Executive Director, National Coalition for Child Protection Reform**

**Re: African American Family Preservation Act (SF716 / HF912)**

**Date: March 20, 2024**

We all know the adage “Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me.” It is an honor to submit this statement to lawmakers who have refused to be fooled twice. It is my hope that you will continue your current good work by passing the African American Family Preservation Act.

I’ll explain what I mean about not being fooled below. First, let me introduce myself and the organization I represent.

The National Coalition for Child Protection Reform is a small nonprofit child advocacy organization dedicated to trying to make the “child welfare” system better serve America’s most vulnerable children. You can read all about our distinguished Board of Directors – the nation’s finest *ad hoc* child welfare think tank -- here <https://nccpr.org/nccpr-board-and-staff/> and about what others in the field say about us here: <https://nccpr.org/what-others-say-about-nccpr/> My own background is in journalism: 19 years as a practitioner, three as a professor. I spent much of my time covering child welfare, work that culminated in publication of a well-received book, *Wounded Innocents* (Prometheus Books, 1990, 1995).

As the letterhead makes clear, we’re not from Minnesota. But we’ve been following Minnesota child welfare for decades and made multiple trips to the state. But most important is our national perspective: our ability to compare and contrast performance among the states. Sadly, Minnesota’s performance has been among the worst in America for decades.

- Minnesota tears apart families and consigns children to the chaos of foster care at a rate vastly above the national average – even when rates of child poverty are factored in. In 2021, the most recent year for which comparative data are available, the rate of entries into foster care in Minnesota was more than double the national average – only seven states were worse.

So when others tell you massive removal of children is needed to keep children safe, please ask yourselves: Are Minnesota children really more than twice as safe as the national average? That's certainly not what we've been reading in the *Star Tribune* lately.

- The 2021 figures are not an aberration. Minnesota has been an extreme outlier every year since 1999.

- Minnesota's record for racial disproportionality, when it comes to taking away Black children, is even worse than the national average.

- Minnesota's record for racial disproportionality, when it comes to taking away Native American children, is the worst in America, by far.

Our full report on Minnesota child welfare, [available here](#), has details and sources for all of these data. But I'll just note one thing now: I hope the state Department of Human Services isn't still giving you that nonsense line about how Minnesota counts entries other states don't. If they pull that one again, please get in touch and I'll explain why it's not true.

Understandably, you may not know about all these data. DHS certainly has no reason to tell you. But I'll tell you who does know: reporters and editors at the *Star Tribune*. They knew in 2014 and they know now. They've simply chosen not to tell you.

Instead, as an inferno of needless removal rages in Minnesota, every few years, that newspaper comes along to pour gasoline on the fire.

So in 2014, they falsely claimed that in Minnesota – a state more fanatical about removing children than almost any other -- somehow a supposed devotion to *not* removing children was placing them in danger.

A prior legislature and a prior governor believed it. A commission falsely claimed that the “pendulum” had swung too far toward keeping families together. The result was a [foster-care panic](#), a sharp sudden surge in removals of children – over and above the already high level – because everyone from caseworkers to county agency chiefs was terrified to leave children in their own homes. Between 2014 and 2017, the number of children trapped in Minnesota foster care – already far too high – skyrocketed 50%. So let's be clear: In Minnesota, the pendulum swings only from an excessive rate of removal to an *obscene* rate of removal.

But there's one thing foster care panics don't do: They don't make children safer. That's true even when using the deeply flawed measure chosen by some prior politicians and reporters themselves: child abuse deaths. In the few places large enough to measure, such as New York City, Florida and Illinois, the number of such deaths stayed the same or went up after foster-care panics.

In contrast, dialing back the child welfare surveillance state, curbing foster care and bolstering concrete help for families *does* work. A liberal Texas think tank stopped crusading for more foster care after [conducting this study](#), showing what did, and did not, make children safer.

The “[unintended abolition](#),” when family police agencies had to pull back during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated the same. Fearmongers predicted COVID would lead to a “pandemic of child abuse.” Instead, when child welfare agencies stepped back, community-based community-run mutual aid organizations stepped up and the federal government stepped in with the best “preventive service” of all – no-strings-attached cash – child abuse went down.

That’s because the real reasons for the horror story cases have nothing to do with a supposed fanatical devotion to family preservation. Instead, they often result from workers so deluged with false reports, trivial cases and poverty cases that they have no time to investigate any case properly.

But the best evidence that the *Star Tribune*’s foster-care panic failed to make children safer comes from – the *Star Tribune*. As you know, their recent stories read almost like a cut-and-paste of the 2014 series. They are filled with horror stories about deaths of children known to the system. So by their own criteria, the foster care panic they set off in 2014 and all that followed failed.

The *Star Tribune* used to be one of America’s great regional newspapers. Long ago, their editorial page did some of the most careful, nuanced reporting on these issues to be found anywhere. But today, the *Star Tribune* shames the profession of which I used to be a part.

In contrast, you are bringing honor to the profession of lawmaking. By refusing to be fooled twice, by refusing to tolerate another foster care panic, and by looking earnestly and honestly for better ideas, you may become a model for the nation.

You are following another famous adage “First, do no harm.” Now, I hope you will move Minnesota forward by passing the African American Family Preservation Act. But don’t do it only because of how much it will help Black children avoid the enormous trauma of needless foster care, though surely that would be reason enough. Do it because, by reducing the overload on the entire system, it will make all Minnesota children safer.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please reach out at any time.

Thank you.

March 14, 2024

Re: SF 716 African American Family Preservation Act

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners is proud to offer our support to SF 716 (Champion), a bill that makes significant efforts to keep African American children with their families. We know that racial disparities exist throughout the entire child protection process, particularly for African American families. Ramsey County is committed to working with community to address these disparities to create a more equitable child protection system that works for all families.

In Ramsey County we are focused on transforming our own systems and processes to help address these disparities and find ways to ensure that more children stay with their families, safely. Some of these changes include focusing on early intervention work and connections to children's mental health services, mapping with community and Public Health to create safety in family and kinship relationships, staffing to co-respond with law enforcement and be immediately available in all situations, and safely diverting child protection cases to Youth Intervention and Parent Support Outreach Program utilizing our specialized caseload multi-disciplinary team units.

The bill sets higher standards on child protection agencies to work closely with parents to find family members or other kin who can take children in before turning to non-family foster care. Keeping children with family is important. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the African American Welfare Oversight Council created by this bill and the Department of Human Services to improve the overall child welfare system.

We strongly support the African American Family Preservation Act and urge committee members to support it as well. Please feel free to contact Melissa Finnegan (651-278-8374) with any questions.

Thank you,



Commissioner Trista Martinson  
Ramsey County Board Chair



Commissioner Rena Moran  
Ramsey County Legislative Committee Chair

From: **Katy Armendariz** <[karmendariz@rwc-mn.com](mailto:karmendariz@rwc-mn.com)>  
Date: Monday, March 18, 2024  
Subject: Support for HF912  
To: "[rep.dave.pinto@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.dave.pinto@house.mn.gov)" <[rep.dave.pinto@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.dave.pinto@house.mn.gov)>  
Cc: Company <[company@rwc-mn.com](mailto:company@rwc-mn.com)>

Dear Representative Pinto,

I am writing to urge your support for HF 912, the African-American Family Preservation Act. As a BIPOC-founded and run organization based in the Twin Cities, our work brings us into close collaboration with Hennepin and Ramsey County child protection services. Through our daily interactions, we witness firsthand the alarming disparities experienced by Black families within the child welfare system.

I am copying all 36 of our employees on this email, as we collectively stand in solidarity and urge your support for this crucial legislation. It is long overdue, and your advocacy for this bill can and should be a significant part of your legacy in Minnesota.

The data unequivocally demonstrates the urgent need for action. As an organization that has also faced challenges, including trolling and retaliation, for advocating on behalf of families, we implore you to take this request seriously.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We eagerly anticipate your support for HF 912 and look forward to working together to create a more just and equitable child welfare system for all Minnesota families.

Thank you,

Katy Armendariz, MSW, LICSW  
Roots Wellness Center  
Formerly known as Minnesota CarePartner/Roots Recovery  
Founder, President  
Pronouns: she/her/hers  
[393 N. Dunlap St, Suite 300](#)  
[St. Paul, MN 55104](#)  
Office: [612.289.5656](tel:612.289.5656)  
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Email: [karmendariz@rwc-mn.com](mailto:karmendariz@rwc-mn.com)  
<https://rwc-mn.com/>



ROOTS WELLNESS CENTER

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"Never, EVER, be afraid to make some noise and get in GOOD trouble, NECESSARY trouble." John Lewis

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." — Desmond Tutu



# UJIMA RENEWED, LLC

**Joanna Rosa, MS, LPCC, LADC**  
**CEO**  
**Ujima Renewed, LLC**  
**[ujimarenewed@gmail.com](mailto:ujimarenewed@gmail.com)**  
**612-363-8342**

**March 19, 2024**

## **Minnesota House and Senate Legislative Committees,**

I am reaching out to request your support of The Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act, authored by Senator Champion and Representative Agbaje.

I am a licensed therapist and have Black families involved in the CPS system. They are, unfortunately, experiencing the very hardships this act would prevent. I'd like to share Black family experiences:

- Reunification is being stalled for one family by sudden changes to requirements that are repetitive and delaying the process (multiple psychological evals, multiple observation sessions beyond what was required).
- Licensed physician evaluations for one family are being voided because Hennepin County required evaluations completed through county services after the client submitted the completed requirement twice from two different physicians.
- Visitation time is being reduced for one family because the family voluntarily engages in family therapy, and the CPS social worker is counting one hour per week in family therapy the same as a six hour visitation.
- A CPS social worker emailed the care team to let them know that submitting transportation requests in her system is too "difficult" and is now declining any changes in transportation for visitation and appointments.
- A CPS social worker emailed the care team to advise how "mentally ill" her client was and anything the client emails should be dismissed after the client emailed the care team and advised that the delays in unification and lack of communication about visitation changes was prompting her to review the grievance process.

- One family is now experiencing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder through: hypervigilance, nightmares, irritability, constant worrying, angry outbursts, symptoms of sudden panic and separation anxiety because of reunification delays.
- One twelve year old child was boarded in hospital after his foster family called the police to have him removed because they needed his room for their nephew who was being released from juvenile detention the following week.
- One seven year old child was ordered to reunite with her biological father, who was proven in a prior CPS case to have significantly physically abused her, which required hospitalization, his parental rights were terminated, and now is required to have weekly visitation with him. She is now experiencing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder through: hypervigilance, nightmares, symptoms of sudden panic and anxiety.

Child welfare disproportionality is a long standing, egregious and well-documented issue that continues to plague the state of Minnesota. Research shows us that children fare better both in the short and long term when left within their own families. We have an obligation to ensure a child's well-being by preserving their familial connections.

The MN African American Family Preservation Act would serve to:

- Requires active efforts to prevent child's out-of-home placement, eliminate need for child's removal from the home, and reunify child and family as soon as practicable.
- Requires active efforts to develop a safety plan to address child and family needs before local agency petitions court to remove a child.
- Requires that, if neglect is alleged, the safety plan incorporates economic services to prevent neglect.
- Requires active efforts to support noncustodial parents and relatives who want to care for a child.
- Places reasonable restrictions on termination of parental rights to mitigate biases that shape disparities.
- Amends statute to empower reestablishment of parental rights when it's in the child's best interest.
- Requires case reviews of disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.

- Requires local agencies take concrete steps to identify, address, and reduce factors that lead to disproportionality and disparities in child welfare outcomes.
- Establishes an African American Child Welfare Oversight Council to monitor the system and make recommendations for improving child welfare services for African American children.
- Establishes an African American Child Well-Being Unit that provides training and technical assistance to reduce child welfare disparities.
- Provides grants to support families and communities impacted by racial disparities in child welfare.
- Requires creation of online compliance & feedback portal to receive reports of noncompliance with the law.
- Appropriates funding to administer the law and establishes this funding as an ongoing appropriation.

Everyone has a stake in ensuring our child protection system is fair and equitable. Thank you in advance for your time, service and support of this bill.

Sincerely,



**Joanna Rosa, MS, LPCC, LADC**



## West African Collaborative (WAC)

8085 Wayzata Blvd. Suite 5. Minneapolis, MN 55426

<https://www.wacmn.org>

To: Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chair Melissa Wiklund and Committee Members,

I am reaching out to request your support of the **Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (HF912/SF716)**, authored by Senator Champion and Rep Agbaje.

Child welfare disproportionality is a long standing, egregious and well-documented issue that continues to plague the state of Minnesota. African American children are removed from their homes, families, and communities at alarming rates. A large majority are moving from child protection to juvenile detention (foster care to prison pipeline). In addition, the overall statistical outcomes for foster youth are troubling. The likelihood of justice system involvement increases as related to the number of placements a youth has experienced. The risks of substance use, housing insecurity, lack of education, generational problems, and sex trafficking are significantly higher for young people that have been in foster care than their counterparts that did not experience out-of-home placement.

Research shows us that children fare better both in the short and long term when they are provided economic and safety services within their own families. We have an obligation to ensure a child's well-being by preserving their familial connections. We urge you to support this bill and keep families safely together.

**The MN African American Family Preservation Act would serve to:**

- **Protect children and strengthen families**
- **Reduce the cost of child welfare services and out of home placement**
- **Reduce law enforcement and judicial systems costs for intervention**
- **Improve the mental health and social functioning for African American children**
- **Improve the child protection department efficacy**

The cost of removal to the state is exponentially higher than it would be to temporarily provide in-home support to a NON-ABUSIVE family that may be facing hardships related to poverty. Minnesota pays upwards of 25k per child to place the child in foster care while family preservation and in home services costs under 5k.

Everyone has a stake in ensuring our child protection system is fair and equitable. As your constituent, it is my hope that the issues this bill seeks to address are a high concern. Thank you in advance for your time, service, and support of this bill!

Respectfully,

Jonathan Rose, PhD

*Executive Director*, West African Collaborative

Phone: 612 990-5264. Email: [jmrose@slcmn.org](mailto:jmrose@slcmn.org)

**ZION  
BAPTIST  
CHURCH**



621 ELWOOD AVENUE NORTH - MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55411  
(612) 377-5436 Telephone (612) 377-2199 Facsimile  
*Brian C. Herron, Pastor*

March 14th, 2024

To Senate Heath and Human Services

From Pastor Brian Herron Sr.

I'm writing urging you to act on and support the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act (SF716)

This is a very important bill for our state, our community, and cities as a whole.

Child welfare disparities harm African American children. Black children are overrepresented at every stage of child protection services. The Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act provides a package of tools for systemic change.

This has historic context and significance in our City... question is why do we even have to fight for this?

With all the studies and disparities that show our community is disproportionately impacted in every way and given the fact that It is always very traumatic for a child not to be with their parent, we lessen the harm when they are placed with a relative over a stranger and particularly those of another culture especially when there are relatives who can provide a loving nurturing space for the child and want to do so.

We are not asking anything unreasonable here, this is for the preservation of Black children and Black families as a whole...I am urging each of you to support this bill.

Respectfully Submitted

*Pastor Brian C. Herron Sr.*

Pastor Brian C. Herron Sr.