



# Association of Minnesota Counties

March 3, 2020

Mr. Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Division:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), we appreciate the opportunity to share comments on H.F. 3127, on requirements for court-appointed counsel child protection cases.

Counties appreciate the amendment language that would establish a task force to examine the issues around implementing any expansion of court appointed counsel in child protection cases. There is great variation across the state when it comes to the ability for counties to expand court appointed counsel services. Some counties already ensure counsel is available at the Emergency Protective Care hearings. However, other counties struggle to find attorneys to contract with for the already required court appearances due to barriers such as distance and lack of resources.

Creating a task force that includes a role to help identify and address any potential barriers, including cost, across the state will be key to moving forward. We recognize the proposed task force includes a variety of voices which is necessary to be able to make recommendations. We appreciate the addition of a county human service director, which will be a critical voice when it comes to discussing the child welfare process. Counties **recommend adding a county administrator to the task force membership**. County administrators play a key role in contracting with court appointed attorneys and preparing county budgets.

We thank Rep. Rena Moran for her leadership and commitment to families. Counties look forward to participating in this important work.

Sincerely,



Carli Stark, Public Safety Policy Analyst  
Association of Minnesota Counties