



Institute to
**Transform
Child Protection**

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March 13, 2024

Representative Gene Pelowski
Minnesota House of Representatives
Higher Education Finance and Policy
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Fostering Independence Grants (HF 4024)

Chair Pelowski and Members of the Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee:

My name is Hannah Burton and I am an Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Institute to Transform Child Protection at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. I am writing to you as a supporter of Fosters in Minnesota and to express my concern of HF 4024 as it relates to the Fostering Independence Grants (FIG).

The proposed language in the bill provides for a waiting list for Fosters seeking FIG funding which helps Minnesota Fosters maintain stable housing, reduce work hours, and provides for their basic needs so that they can pursue further education. As a state, Minnesota has historically fallen devastatingly short in supporting Fosters who often have fewer resources available to them and must overcome unnecessary challenges and barriers to pursue their educational, career, and life goals. While we are glad the Minnesota Legislature passed the bipartisan Fostering Higher Education Act two years ago as a promise to invest in Minnesota Fosters, HF 4024 undermines that promise by creating a waitlist that will have the effect of many students being forced to end their college journey early—others will not be able to begin college at all. This is unacceptable.

Fosters are used to promises made to them being broken. When that happens, it causes irreparable harm and is a violation of trust. As a state, we owe it to Fosters not to go back on that promise and to ensure that the FIG program is fully funded and available to any Foster who needs it.

I am asking for your support to correct the projected shortfall for FIG funding and allocate the funds necessary to support the original legislation. Thank you for your advocacy and support of Minnesota Fosters.

Sincerely,

Hannah Burton

Equal Justice Works Fellow
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