



EVOLVE
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*Growing Families
Enriching Lives*

March 17, 2026

Re: HF4217 –Supporting Youth with TPLPCs and Improvements for Extended Foster Care

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

I am writing in support of HF4217 (Supporting Youth with TPLPCs and improvements for Extended Foster Care) as the Executive Director of EVOLVE Family Services. Our agency has provided child-centered family services in Minnesota for over 48 years and is a recognized leader in child welfare permanency services through both adoptions and Transfers of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody.

EVOLVE works extensively with kinship families where a TPLPC is the preferred permanency option, as well as directly with youth through Child-Specific Recruitment, elevating youth voice in identifying permanency options when they are no longer able to reunify with their birth family, and Successful Transitions to Adulthood for Youth (STAY) programming, supporting youth up to age 23 who are facing transitioning out of foster care without permanency identified. Ensuring that both caregivers and youth understand their rights and options in permanency is critical for them to make informed decisions about their future, and expanding the supports eligible to youth with a TPLPC will assist them in achieving stability and long-term success during the critical transition to adulthood.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and the benefits it will bring, including:

- Requiring that children in foster care who are fourteen and older complete an independent living plan to support planning and consideration with the young person of what their future may hold.
- Allowing young people who are eligible for disability supports to choose to remain in Extended Foster Care if they prefer relying on those supports and clarifies that when a young person continues in extended school time as part of their disability supports they should remain eligible for extended foster care, and, that young people in foster care should also be eligible for MN Paid Leave supports to bond with a child or care for a family member
- Allowing youth who gained TPLPC as their permanency option within six months of turning 18 to be eligible for extended foster care supports. These youth continue to need meaningful, ongoing support, as some of the protections of a legal adoption are lacking with a TPLPC.

Sincerely,

Susannah Barnes, LSW, CSW - Executive Director

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

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

March 16, 2026

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

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

We encourage your support for HF4217 and the goals of increasing responsiveness to youth as they transition out of foster care and into young adulthood with Extended Foster Care supports. This bill also points to the importance of recognizing challenges for children and youth whose permanency is defined by a Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody (TPLPC). Though this legislation does not fundamentally address the gaps for children and youth with this status, our hope is the bill discussion helps to highlight challenges that can be addressed in coming sessions – including challenges as outlined by the Office of Ombudsperson for Foster Youth (OOFY) with access to health care, family inheritance, and other legal rights and responsibilities afforded to family members that are not granted to children and youth with TPLPC permanency status.

Minnesota continues to strive to improve responses to children and families in need of foster care supports. AspireMN is committed to the values of Quality Parenting Initiative-MN and the promise of enduring system transformation that it points to with commitments to research informed practice, focus on meaningful relationships and reliance on lived experience leadership.

We are grateful for the thoughtful leadership of this committee on behalf of Minnesota's children, youth and families.

Warm regards,

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.

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

I am writing in my capacity as the foster care and adoption program director at North Homes Children and Family Services, a nonprofit agency serving children, youth, and families across Minnesota. Every day, our team works alongside young people who have experienced significant instability, trauma, and disruption. I respectfully urge your support for HF4217 to strengthen services and protections for youth in foster care, particularly those with a Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody (TPLPC) and to continue improving and expand Extended Foster Care (EFC).

Youth who achieve permanency through TPLPC may still require ongoing guidance and support. Although TPLPC offers an important pathway to stability, it does not always account for the continued developmental, emotional, and practical needs of young people as they transition to adulthood. When challenges arise, access to responsive supports is critical.

Additionally, the proposed improvements to Extended Foster Care reflect what we know from practice: young people benefit from continued guidance and connection as they transition into adulthood. Requiring an independent living plan for youth age 14 and older ensures that planning begins early and focuses on the young person's voice, and future goals.

We also strongly support provisions that:

- Allow youth eligible for disability services to remain in Extended Foster Care if they choose, understanding that their needs may extend beyond traditional timelines.
- Clarify that youth engaged in extended school programming as part of their disability supports remain eligible for EFC.
- Ensure youth in foster care have access to Minnesota Paid Leave to bond with a child or care for a family member, promoting stability and family connection.
- Expand eligibility for Extended Foster Care to youth who achieved TPLPC within six months of turning 18, closing a critical gap in support.
- Increase accountability by requiring notification to the Commissioner when a young person is terminated from foster care.

These provisions reflect practical, informed improvements that will better align our systems with the realities young people face. They recognize that the path to adulthood

is best served with continued support which can make a profound difference in long-term outcomes, including housing stability, education, and overall well-being.

At our agency, we have seen firsthand the resilience young people have in foster care and the challenges they face when they do not receive necessary supports. HF4217 represents a thoughtful and necessary step toward ensuring that all youth, regardless of their permanency pathway, have the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to Minnesota's children and families. I respectfully ask for your support of HF4217.

Sincerely,



Luke Jurek
Foster Care and Adoption Program Director
North Homes Children and Family Services
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NORTH HOMES
Children and Family Services



Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

Re: Support for HF 4217 – Improving Support for Youth with TPLPCs and Extended Foster Care

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Nexus Family Healing, we respectfully urge your support for HF 4217, legislation that addresses critical gaps for children and youth who experience permanency disruption, including those with Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody (TPLPC), and strengthens Minnesota's Extended Foster Care (EFC) system.

Nexus Family Healing is a Minnesota-based nonprofit serving children, youth, and families with complex needs across the child welfare continuum. We work closely with young people whose permanency outcomes have not provided lasting stability and who require additional, developmentally appropriate support as they transition to adulthood. HF 4217 responds to these realities with thoughtful, targeted improvements.

We strongly support the requirement that youth age 14 and older complete an independent living plan, ensuring intentional planning that engages young people in understanding their goals, options, and future supports. Early and consistent planning is essential to successful transitions to adulthood.

HF 4217 also makes important improvements to Extended Foster Care eligibility, particularly for youth with disabilities. Allowing eligible young people to remain in EFC while accessing disability supports, clarifying eligibility during extended school time, and ensuring foster youth can access Minnesota Paid Leave for bonding or family caregiving promotes equity and stability during critical life transitions.

We further support extending EFC eligibility to youth who achieved TPLPC within six months of turning 18, recognizing that timing alone should not determine access to support for young people navigating significant change. Additionally, the bill strengthens accountability by requiring notification to the DCYF Commissioner when a young person is terminated from foster care.

HF 4217 strengthens Minnesota's commitment to youth who have experienced trauma and instability by improving planning, extending access to support, and increasing system accountability. We respectfully urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Christopher D. Kokal

Christopher D. Kokal
Senior Director of Growth and Advocacy
Nexus Family Healing

Informational Memo

Date: September 25, 2025

To: Marvin Davis (DCYF), Michelle Seymore (DCYF), Heidi Ombisa-Skallet (DCYF), Kathleen Hiniker (DCYF), Representative Kim Hicks, Representative Jessica Hanson, Kirsten Anderson (Aspire-MN), Stephanie Hogensen (Children’s Cabinet) *Listed recipients are welcome to share this memo with others. OOFY reserves discretion to share this memo more widely, including via publication on our agency website.

From: Misty Coonce, Ombudsperson for Foster Youth (OOFY)

RE: Opportunities to strengthen requirements and practices for TPLPC (Transfers of Permanent and Legal Physical Custody)

OOFY supports and appreciates the statutory changes made in recent years that further protect foster youth’s relationships with relatives and kin, including their parent(s), through updates to the preferred permanency outcomes. From the perspective of foster youth, we see great value in TPLPCs to relatives continuing to be prioritized over TPR and adoption to non-relatives. We understand that TPLPC will continue to be used more frequently as our system becomes more cautious with legally severing a parent-child relationship through Termination of Parental rights; we support these efforts.

From OOFY’s experience and perspective, TPLPC and adoption are often presented to caregivers and foster youth as largely equal options, with similar level of permanence and supports. However, there are important differences that youth, families, and child welfare professionals need to fully understand. There is opportunity to address current requirements and practices regarding TPLPCs to better ensure foster youth’s access to stability, supports, services, information, and protection.

We will continue to monitor, share, and investigate situations related to referenced content in this memo and more broadly in line with our legislative mandate to “promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice for youth who are in the care of the state.” We offer this memo to inform and support other’s efforts to pursue improvements in policy and practice. We include a list of several areas that may benefit from further attention to ensure appropriate protections for Foster Youth in TPLPC situations, as well as a list of relevant items/activities outside of this memo’s scope.

Identified areas and opportunities

Reduced access to health insurance

- Adoption: Youth can remain on their adoptive parent's insurance through age 26 just as birth children can.
- TPLPC: Youth may be covered by MA as part of Northstar Kinship Assistance until age 18, with the option for the relative custodian to request extension to age 21. They cannot be added to their relative custodian's health insurance after Northstar benefits end. They do not qualify in the MA-FFY category. This leaves a timeframe of several years with limited access to health insurance.
- Possible solution: From OOFY's understanding, addressing this gap likely requires seeking legislative change to Medicaid policy.

Fewer opportunities for youth to provide formal and informed input

- Adoption: To proceed with adoption finalization involving a foster youth age 14 or older, legal consent is required and there is a formal process to obtain this. [DHS-1956-ENG \(Consent to Adoption for Youth over 14 years of age, pursuant to Minnesota Statute, section 259.24, subdivision 3\)](#)
- TPLPC: Although current statute ([Sec. 142A.605 MN Statutes](#) Subd 1, a, (5) requires that a foster youth age 14 or older must be consulted about a proposed TPLPC, there is not a formal process for this and it is unclear how this is happening in practice.
 - o This practice guide [Finding Permanency fo Children in Foster Care: Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody to a Relative](#) indicates that a youth age 14 or older signs the Kinship Placement agreement. There is no signature line for youth on the Kinship Placement Agreement. The practice guide provides no guidance on what consultation with a youth 14 or older might look like
- Possible solutions:
 - o Create a more formal process to obtain foster youth's consent to TPLPC.
 - o Create materials that help ensure foster youth receive clear, consistent information on different permanency pathways (such as TPLPC, TPR/adoption, TPR/Permanent Custody to the Agency, entering Extended Foster Care) and the pros and cons of each, so that youth can provide informed input on their preferences. Materials should clearly outline the differences in access to benefits and services between each permanency outcome.
 - o For example, foster youth who consent to TPLPC will lose access to EFC, some avenues for health insurance coverage at 18, they won't have automatic inheritance rights from their relative custodian, and they may not be eligible for ETV. Foster youth need to understand the differences in their biological parents ability to regain custody after a TPLPC vs. options to seek restoration of parental rights after a TPR.
 - o As long as youth have been appropriately informed, their input should be prioritized.

Fewer consequences for abandonment/child maltreatment

- Statute is clear that child maltreatment concerns should be treated the same whether it's a biological parent, adoptive parent, or relative custodian. In practice, several situations have come to OOFY's attention where relative custodians (and adoptive parents) have a much easier time "giving up on" the

child when things get hard. This leads to additional moves and instability for the youth, and possible lack of appropriate consequences (such as a maltreatment finding or other indicator of possible concern about caregiving ability or commitment, that would come up on a background study) for the relative custodian or adoptive parent.

- This document [DHS-7024B-ENG Ver 6-19 8-15-19](#) specifies that existing child welfare laws apply for TPLPCs, and further notes “Relative custodians may request modification or termination of TPLPC orders.”
- Possible solution: Further clarification in written materials that termination of a TPLPC is only considered in order to reunify the child with one or both parents or in limited situations, to transfer custody to another relative when this is in the best interest of the child.

Fewer protections for ongoing relationships with relatives

- Adoption: [Communication and Contact Agreements](#) can be entered into as part of the adoption finalization process to support ongoing relationship with a child’s parent, siblings, and other relatives. In statute, a clear process for enforcement of the agreement is outlined, including the opportunity for the prevailing party to be awarded attorney’s fees and costs. The parties to the agreement are provided a certified copy of the order.
- TPLPC: Although the TPLPC order can outline expectations for ongoing contact with relatives and/or a child’s parent(s), there is less opportunity for enforcement. Unlike Communication and Contact Agreements, only the relative custodian typically receives a copy of the TPLPC order.

Less preparation of relative custodians

- Adoption: It is clear in statute that a complete, thorough, detailed, and current Social and Medical History for a foster child is required to be given to a prospective adoptive parent [Sec. 259.43 MN Statutes](#) . As part of the adoption finalization process, the child’s Social and Medical History is reviewed by DCYF, which helps ensure they are completed comprehensively as required.
- TPLPC: There is no statutory requirement to provide a Social and Medical History. [Administrative rule](#) outlines information that should be provided about foster children before placement or within five days. There is no specific mention of a Social and Medical History in statute or rule for TPLPC situations, and no requirement that information about foster children be provided in writing. For TPLPC’s, the child’s Social and Medical history is not reviewed by DCYF as part of the TPLPC finalization process.
- A complete, thorough, detailed, and current Social and Medical History helps support caregivers in making an informed decision on their ability and readiness to permanently care for a child, including knowing what supports and services they should seek access to and advocate for.

Inaccurate legal documents

- For most children, a birth certificate reflecting their identified given name is applied for and issued soon after birth. In some situations, this does not happen, leading to an inaccurate birth certificate (i.e. name is listed as “Baby Girl Last Name” or “Last Name, Last Name”). Children must have a name before they can have a social security number assigned.
- Adoption: In an adoption finalization process, these issues are routinely addressed and birth certificates amended to reflect the child’s given name, to ensure the name on a birth certificate matches the name

on a court order. Similarly, there is an expectation that the social services agency must verify that the child has a social security number and apply for one, if needed, in the adoption finalization process.

- TPLPC: The process to verify documentation and correct name discrepancies is less clear, resulting in incorrect/inaccurate birth certificates and related challenges with obtaining social security cards and other critical documentation for the child. There is no expectation that a social services agency must verify that a child has a social security number or to apply for one. It can be a complicated, confusing process for relative custodians to address this issue after a TPLPC is finalized.
 - o After becoming aware that this issue is happening more frequently due to our state's shift to prioritizing TPLPC over adoption, OOFY raised this issue to DCYF staff. They shared plans to further explore solutions.

Rights to inheritance

- Adoption: A child inherits from an adoptive parent as they would from a birth parent.
- TPLPC: There is no right to inherit from relative custodians unless specified in a will. ([DHS-7024A-ENG Ver 5-19 8-15-19](#)). When a relative custodian passes away, foster youth currently have less access to financial resources and legal rights that would have been available to them if they were adopted. When relative custodians have biological children, this unequal access to inheritance rights can lead to additional family stress at an already stressful and challenging time.

Reduced oversight and review for TPLPC process

- Adoption: DCYF reviews the suitability of the placement through a formalized review process. As noted previously, Adoption Placement Agreements and many other documents are formally reviewed by DCYF as part of the adoption finalization process.
- TPLPC: DCYF does not review the suitability of the placement or Kinship Placement Agreements through a formalized process. They currently do not have the legal authority for this because the children are not under guardianship of the commissioner.

Unclear or lacking protections for immigrant children who are undocumented

- Adoption: There is clear requirement that the social services agency must assist in applying for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) for a child who lacks legal status, including gathering required documentation and arranging access to immigration services. This is included in the Adoption Process Checklist [DHS-6542-ENG \(4-19-15\)GJF](#)
- TPLPC: There is no similar requirement in the TPLPC Process Checklist [DHS-6978 Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody \(TPLPC\) Process Checklist for Children in County Foster Care](#)

Limitations

It is important to note the following areas that are not addressed in this Informational Memo:

Transfers of Custody outside of juvenile court

OOFY is aware of increasing practices of counties supporting, and to varying extent facilitating, transfers of custody for children prior to their entry into foster care and prior opening a juvenile court case ("family

arrangements”). OOFY supports practices that empower parents and families to make the best decisions possible for their children, and practices that minimize unnecessary involvement of systems. However, we hold concerns about unintended negative consequences of these practices, such as youth and families not being appropriately informed of the pros and cons of informal vs. formal system involvement, lack of services and support to the caregiver receiving the transfer of custody in family court (including financial support), lack of court oversight of decision making, lack of protection or services for the youth that they may otherwise receive if they formally entered foster care (Sibling Bill of Rights, attorney representation, GaL appointment, eligibility for EFC, FIG, ETC, etc). This list does not address these situations and instead focuses on cases where a social services agency has responsibility for care and custody of a foster child/sibling group.

HF 3002

OOFY is aware of legislation introduced at the end of the 2025 session [HF 3002 as introduced - 94th Legislature \(2025 - 2026\)](#) which proposes several substantial changes related to a youth’s access to Extended Foster Care and other supports and services after a TPLPC. In recognition that there are active conversations between the bills’ author and others with various perspectives, this list does not address anything from that bill. OOFY is happy to provide our agency’s perspective and recommendations related to that bill as it further evolves.

SOUL Family Framework as an additional permanency pathway

This Informational Memo addresses opportunity to strengthen one of the currently available permanency outcomes for Minnesota foster youth. OOFY recognizes and supports efforts that are underway between DCYF and community partners to more seriously explore the [SOUL Family Framework](#) as an additional pathway in Minnesota.

March 17, 2026

Re: SF3970, HF4217 | Modifying Eligibility for Extended Foster Care and Increased Access to Medical Assistance

Dear Chairs and Members of the Committee:

In September, our office shared a memo regarding both the value and gaps in practices of Transfers of Permanent and Legal Physical Custody (TPLPC). We have included that memo here, in case it is helpful as you consider strengthening services for youth who have experienced a TPLPC.

As stated in the memo, OOFY supports changes that protect foster youth's relationships with relatives and kin. We also support services that help transition-age youth and youth with disabilities gain stability and independence—through medical assistance (MA), housing supports, case management services, and other services being considered.

We support the efforts being made in SF3970, HF4217 but do have suggestions for areas that would benefit from clarification.

1. Defining youth who have experienced a TPLPC as “foster youth.”
 - a. Minnesota statutes already have at least three slightly different definitions of foster care (Chapters 260C, 260B and 260D, and 260.63). This leads to confusion regarding who exactly is a foster youth, and what programs and services they are entitled to.
 - b. Even with the changes made in this bill, there are still significant differences between youth who age out of foster care and youth who have a TPLPC (see memo).
 - c. The messaging to young people themselves would be confusing—their relative may be made “permanent” guardian (until 18 years of age) at which point they may re-enter “foster care” (EFC).
2. EFC is intended for young people who age out of care, recognizing that youth who continue to experience some instability and age out of foster care near-universally need additional supports as they transition to adulthood.

We know that no matter how older youth leave foster care (adoption, reunification, TPLPC), they also need additional support after they turn 18. This is particularly true when those youth obtain permanency at older ages. TPLPCs have many benefits, including preserving some rights for biological parents and supporting homes with relatives.

As stated in our Sept. memo, TPLPC and adoption are presented as largely equal permanency options. However, the differences in protections and services are not commonly understood. While this bill's effort is looking to eliminate some of those gaps, it is OOFY's perspective that TPLPCs need additional changes to 1) provide clarity regarding the differences of TPLPC and other outcomes, and 2) ensure that TPLPCs are the right pathway.

Letter of Support

If permanency options like TPLPC, adoption, or reunification fail, especially close to or soon after age 18, we need better solutions to ensure those young people can receive the support and protection they deserve. In some regards, agencies are incentivized to have youth who are 17½ reach permanency and not age out of foster care; what are the safeguards to ensure that, if that decision is a TPLPC, it is the right solution? For adoption, youth age 14+ provide their legal consent, and Adoption Placement Agreements, along with other documents, are formally reviewed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) as part of adoption finalization. These steps are lacking for TPLPC.

It makes sense for youth who experience a TPLPC to be eligible for a program similar to Extended Foster Care. And we know now that even for young people who are currently eligible for EFC, it is underutilized in Minnesota¹. While nationally, 24% of youth in care at age 18 continued in EFC through their 19th birthday, only 10% of Minnesota foster youth continued in EFC by age 19².

Similarly, we appreciate this bill's efforts to remedy the gaps in access to Medical Assistance for youth who experience a TPLPC vs. those who age out or are adopted. This is an important issue that needs a solution. We suggest exploration of whether changes can be made to Minnesota's criteria for the "former foster youth" category for MA eligibility, to include youth who experience a TPLPC close to age 18, without adding an additional competing definition of foster care.

Similarly, we appreciate this bill's efforts to remedy the gaps in access to Medical Assistance for youth who experience a TPLPC vs those who age out or are adopted. This is an important issue that needs a solution. We suggest exploration of whether changes can be made to Minnesota's criteria for the "former foster youth" category for MA eligibility, to include youth who experience a TPLPC close to age 18, without adding an additional competing definition of foster care.

In summary, OOFY supports changes to program eligibility that will provide better supports to youth who have a TPLPC or receive disability services. However, we would urge the legislature to be mindful of decisions that 1) further contribute to confusion about who is considered a "foster youth" and 2) the real imbalances that already exist within these programs.

Sincerely,



Ombudsperson for Foster Youth

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¹ Flannigan, A., Rosenberg, R., Sanders, M., Downing, K., Ball, J., & Ibarra, A. (2025). *Experiences in Minnesota's Extended Foster Care Program*. Child Trends.

² The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2023). *2023 Minnesota profile: Transition-age youth in foster care*. [aef-fosteringyouth-stateprofile-MN.pdf](#)