



March 28, 2023

To: Health Finance and Policy Committee Members

Re: Minnesota HF2930/SF2995

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Proof Alliance, please accept this letter of support for appropriations to Department of Health entities to improve systems of care for children with special/specific health needs. I write to you as the Executive Director at Proof Alliance, the Minnesota-based nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder [FASD] and caring for all impacted.

13% of babies in Minnesota are born with prenatal alcohol exposure each year. Prenatal alcohol exposure is the leading cause of preventable birth defects in the U.S. Prenatal alcohol exposure causes FASD. **FASD is a disability with lifelong implications** that can impact brain function, development, learning, behavior, and social skills. One in 20 children in the U.S. has an FASD. That means it's likely to be in every classroom across this state.

This bill would improve the lives of people with disabilities, including people living with an FASD. For example, developmental and social-emotional screening and referrals to community-based resources and support are critical to supporting people with an FASD. People living with an FASD are more likely to need foster care, PCA services, waivers, medical care, mental health care, case management and special education. The physical, mental, and emotional cost of FASD to families is devastating, and the financial cost to our state is shocking. But, if a child is screened and diagnosed early, and connected to the right interventions, resources and supports 1) the child has an opportunity to reach their full potential, and 2) the child is more likely to experience better outcomes, better quality of life, and less healthcare and other resource utilization.

We urge the committee to support this vital legislation and thank you in advance for supporting budget proposals related to children with special/specific health needs and disabilities in HF2930/SF2995.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mollie O'Brien".

Mollie O'Brien
Executive Director
Proof Alliance