NORTH HOMES
Children and Family Services

(218) 760-4910
Luke.jurek@northhomes.org
www.northhomes.org
303 SE First Street, Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services 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 SF3970 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:

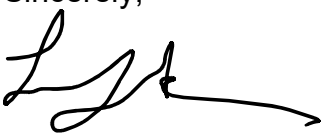
- Allow youth eligible for disability services to remain in Extended Foster Care if they choose, understanding that their needs may extend beyond traditional timelines.
- Clarify that youth engaged in extended school programming as part of their disability supports remain eligible for EFC.
- Ensure youth 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. SF3970 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 SF3970.
Sincerely,



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