

February 13, 2023

Representative Dave Pinto  
Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Representative Pinto and Committee:

As the former Ombudsperson for American Indian Families, State of Minnesota, from 2001-2013, and an advocate for fair and transparent child welfare practices, I support, and I would ask for your support of HF 1071.

As I'm sure you are keenly aware, Minnesota has and continues to have some of the worst outcomes for American Indian children in out of home placements. Our many years of initiatives, workgroups, MN DHS interventions and ideas, have not worked to reduce these disparities. Having a place for tribes to lead these efforts and promote methodologies that have proven to work in Indian country are the next logical step. Updating previous statutes that empower tribes to lead in these areas are of upmost importance.

Better defining terms to strengthen processes where tribes can retain their children in a supportive, culturally responsive environment is the best chance at improved outcomes for American Indian children and families.

I hope you vote yes on this bill and advance improved outcomes for our American Indian children who so desperately need it. From boarding schools to the 1960's scoop, to out of home placements, our Indian families have endured enough pain, separation, finding ways back to our communities, and finding lost relatives. Another generation of lost children can end a long and hard road for American Indian communities throughout Minnesota. Please vote to advance the bill.

Sincerely,

Dawn Blanchard  
Omaha/Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
Former Ombudsperson for American Indian Families,  
Proud Minnesota American Indian community member