



February 23, 2023

Representative Pinto and Members of the Committee:

We strongly support HF 1479 – legislation that authorizes a child welfare paperwork reduction study, with accompanying recommendations. We thank Representative Hanson and Senator Mitchell for their leadership on this issue.

As a state supervised, county administered system, Minnesota county child protection (CP) workers have the privilege and responsibility of engaging and working with children and families on a daily basis with the primary focus on children remaining safely in the care of their parents. In situations where out of home placement becomes necessary to ensure child safety, the goal and the work of the child protection worker/agency is focused on safely reunifying the child with their parents. In recent years, not only has the information system (Social Service Information System (SSIS)) become outdated, glitchy and burdensome, the paperwork requirements have become more complex and onerous. This has resulted in our front-line workforce spending more time in front of screens than serving children and families. What we know is that the CP workforce is being buried in paperwork and administrative demands (e.g., “clicking” in SSIS) and that this is a contributing factor to child protection staff turnover, which in some counties has reached 40 – 50% within the last three years.

Not only is this a workforce issue, but this is also a relationship issue. Research tells us that the greatest predictor of a positive outcome in a child protection case is the relationship between the worker and family. How do we support the work with families when paperwork demands take up 40-50% of worker time? A child protection worker recently shared, “The balance of finding time to engage and develop relationships with families is so difficult because of all of the documentation and required paperwork and administrative functions. Why can’t it be easier to help the family locate and access resources, and to work more closely with the family?” Services to children and families should not be impacted based on redundant and burdensome documentation requirements and a data system (SSIS) that is inefficient and unreliable.

HF 1479/ SF X authorizes a review of paperwork requirements, including recommendations for streamlining processes and ongoing review of requirements in consideration of future policy

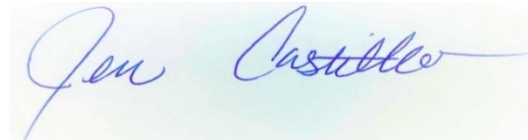
changes. While important to document and capture important and timely information, we must assure that critical information is available to needed parties in a concise, easy to understand format. It is critical that as a system we look at both the administrative requirements and the technologies that support this work while centering the family, foster parent and worker in decision making. Working with all stakeholders including DHS, tribes, and counties to review and consider recommendations is critical to ensure the needs of families and front-line staff are taken into consideration and incorporated in final design and implementation of the work.

We encourage your support for HF 1479.

Respectfully,



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