



The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage Statement in Support of
HF3973 Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act

Saint Paul MN, 4/16/2018 – A critical piece of legislation has been introduced to both the MN House and Senate during the 2018 Legislative session. That Legislation, ‘The MN African American Family Preservation Act to Stop the Arbitrary Removal of Black Children by Minnesota’s Child Protection Department,’ addresses key issues and disparities within Minnesota, while also seeking to extend better standards of care across Minnesota’s Child Protection Department.

Currently African American children are over 3 times more likely than their white counterparts to be reported to child protection services. In the face of the same allegations and behavior; African Americans and children of 2 or more races are removed from their home at a rate 3.1 and 4.8 times higher than their white counterparts. Worse, once maltreatment has been substantiated, white families with the same or more egregious allegations are more likely to receive services that allow their children to remain in the home, while African American children are removed from their parents, siblings and loved ones. Additionally, more often than their white counterparts black parents are put on a punitive track that can lead to a loss of housing, employment and increased risk of further child protection involvement. Those disparities are exhibiting a basic reality; racial disparities are occurring throughout the entire process; from the initial reporting, screening and assessment to discharge from the system.

But, while these issues are endemic to African American and Communities of Color, they also are creating lowered standards of care across Minnesota’s Child Protection agency through needlessly clogging up the system with children that are not at risk of harm. While this is not an entirely new issue, the child protection reform put into place in 2015 did not take these existing disparities into place, and has exacerbated those disparities. Addressing these disparities not only creates a fairer child protection system, but also creates a child protection system that provides better outcomes to **all** children and their families.

Because of these disparities and the long term threat to the child protection system; the Council supports the MN African American Family Preservation Act. The Act would both frontally remove the disparities in the child welfare system and lead to better service for all stakeholders, by establishing minimum standards to prevent arbitrary and unnecessary removal of African American children from their families. It would work to remove disparities at decision points, thus not only minimizing the number of African American children unnecessarily removed from their families, but just as importantly

ensuring that the child protection system is healthy enough to ensure the welfare of all children

The Council would like to thank Senator Hayden and Representative Moran for introducing the legislation. We would also like to thank Kelis Houston, for doing much of the work to bring this bill before our elected officials. We are requesting not only bipartisan support on this statewide issue, but we are asking communities to become more informed and active around this issue by contacting their elected officials and asking them to support this legislation.

Families, are the very backbone of our state. It is imperative, not just morally, but from a policy perspective to make sure our families, with their children, remain intact so that Minnesota can maintain its bright future.

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;
- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;
- Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;
- Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and
- Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.