

April 17, 2024

Minnesota Senate
Human Service Committee

Dear Chair Hoffman and Members of the Human Service Committee:

My name is Lawaine Longen and I live in Proctor, Minnesota. I am writing today in support of S.F. 5335, Article 1, Sections 4 and 5. These sections of the bill under Article 1 would open Respite options for children and families across the state. I am the parent of two children with significant needs and the services that have been provided to them and the family have been vital in keeping my children in their home and their community. Their needs at times can be very intense and my husband and I continue to work full-time jobs to support our family. Respite has been a relief to both my husband and I and to our children. My family was able to access out-of-home respite on a regular basis up until the time DHS changed the requirement for children's out-of-home respite to having to be offered in a licensed setting.

This much-needed break from caring for children with complex behavioral needs was needed. Now the respite happens in our home which really isn't much of a respite option for either us or the children. Before they could go and they had fun being with other children like them, and it was a fun weekend for them and for us. Now, however if we truly want respite, we have to be the ones to go and that is an added expense for us. We truly don't have the opportunity to relax, and the children really don't get a break from us and from their own home either.

The licensed setting requirement resulted in the loss of the out-of-home respite option for our family. It is probably hard for you to imagine how the loss of the respite break impacts our family. My children are 17 and 16. We can never leave them alone. They cannot cook, clean, bath, toilet themselves without assistance. We don't have the option to be flexible, we don't have the option to do things on a whim, I can't go out with my friends, or even go to a Dr appointment that is not been schedule at least a month in advance.

I urge you to support Senate File 5335, and open respite options for families like mine. It is the most important thing you can do to help us keep our children in their home. We need as many options as we can have.

Sincerely,

Lawaine Longen

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