

April 8, 2026

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3235
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF 4635 – Trust Established for Foster Youth

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA), we write to provide perspective on S.F. 4635, which establishes a foster care benefits trust for youth receiving federal and state benefits while in placement.

AMC and MACSSA support the underlying premise of this legislation and appreciate the meaningful collaboration between the state, counties and Foster Advocates over the past two years. Ensuring that all foster youth have a structured pathway to financial stability is a goal we share – including foster youth who are eligible for the benefits as outlined under SF 4635. The intent to preserve assets, increase transparency, and create long-term financial opportunity for youth is both appropriate and necessary – we support the majority of recommendations outlined in the 2025 [Income and Resources for Youth in Foster Care report](#).

While supportive of SF 4635's premise, our full support is **contingent on a critical condition: any funds that are redirected into individual trust accounts must be fully replaced to counties.**

In accordance with federal and state policy, these funds have been and are currently being utilized to support the cost of care for children in foster placement. Redirecting those dollars without a stable, guaranteed, and administratively workable replacement structure creates immediate fiscal pressure at the local level at a time when our system is implementing federal policies and preparing for statewide implementation of transformational policy - the MAAFPCWDA and juvenile delinquency age change.

In addition to ensuring fiscal stability, counties welcome further policy clarification in the following areas.

- Clarify that provisions only apply to youth where the permanency decision is permanent custody of the Commissioner
- The interface between the trust, existing benefits systems, and county financial processes
- System changes at the local level required to assess, apply for, track, audit and report all eligible benefits
- The operational realities of annual reassessments, appeals, and compliance requirements placed on agencies

This proposal represents an important opportunity to improve outcomes for youth eligible for these benefits and with the recommended policy clarification and fiscal structure, it can do exactly that. Without those elements, it risks shifting cost and complexity in ways that weaken the system and destabilize the county-based workforce.

Counties remain committed to working alongside the Legislature, the Department, and Foster Advocates to address concerns and ensure the young people we collectively serve are supported.

Sincerely,

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Julie Ring
Executive Director, AMC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Paul Verrette
Director, MACSSA
Human Services Policy Analyst, AMC