

April 2, 2026

Chair Wiklund, Ranking Minority Leader Utke, and Members of the Committee,

Foster Advocates is writing in strong support of SF 4337, the proposed pilot grant program providing \$300,000 to connect 200 non-citizen youth in foster care with expert immigration legal representation. This bill addresses critical gaps in Minnesota's child welfare system by funding partnerships between counties and nonprofits like Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Advocates for Human Rights, and Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota to screen youth, provide legal assessments, and secure permanent legal status, fulfilling the unfunded mandate in Minn. Stat. § 260C.452 subd. 4(c). We know there are many ways that non-citizen youth may enter the child welfare system, and once in state care, they are deserving of timely and expert legal support.

County workers are expected to hold so many puzzle pieces in child welfare cases, and should not be expected to also be experts in immigration law. They deserve adequate resources to connect these Fosters promptly with counsel when they enter care, to ensure we are fulfilling our duty as a state to protect all children who are abused, neglected, and abandoned. Counties often lack resources to connect these Fosters promptly with counsel when they enter care. This is not a new issue, but one that Fosters across our statewide network report experiencing whether they were in care a year or a decade ago.

It is time to address this critical resource gap to do right by our collective promise to all Fosters. SF 4337 ensures timely access to funded legal aid, enabling judges in CHIPS proceedings to verify documentation before youth age out or achieve another form of permanency and promoting stability. As a Foster-led organization advancing policy through lived experience, our network has elevated supporting immigrant Fosters as a [critical issue](http://fosteradvocates.org/immigrationkyr) (fosteradvocates.org/immigrationkyr). We urge passage of this essential pilot to uphold Minnesota's promise to all youth in care.

Foster Advocates strongly supports SF 4337 and asks the Committee to do the same.

Osahon Akpata-Tanius
Executive Director
osahon@fosteradvocates.org

