



Health & Human Services
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April 25, 2025

Senator Andrew Mathews
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2233
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Mathews,

On behalf of Sherburne County, we thank you for your service on the Child Protection Task Force, working on behalf of some of Minnesota's most vulnerable residents. We appreciate your efforts to keep kids safe, and families at the center of decisions made.

In a state supervised, county administered system, our county workforce is on the front lines of implementing federal, state and local policies and regulations. I know that you have heard on multiple occasions of the inefficiencies counties experience with the Social Service Information System (SSIS), the state system of client record. In recent years, we've seen renewed policy changes in this area, with the county workforce developing numerous workarounds due to outdated infrastructure. We are grateful for the attention in this area this legislative session and look forward to the day when workers are spending more time supporting children and families than completing onerous data entry and administrative functions.

SSIS inefficiencies are systemic, egregious, and negatively affect all 87 counties. In Sherburne, specifically, we asked case workers to detail the impact that SSIS has on their work:

- "Person data does not talk to generated documents. You enter ten relationships and only a few of them copy into the ICWA genograms, the rest need to be entered manually. NOTHING copies into the social medical history document, nor can you enter it in the document, and it populates in the person tabs."
- "If you want to send the same letter to two people you can't copy the letter because even if you change the setup screen it keeps the first person's name and address in the to line of the document itself and cannot be changed. You have to copy/paste (plus reformatting) or retype the letter."
- "Decision tool dates need to be manually entered in case plans even though the tools are generated within SSIS."
- "You cannot create an OHPP until a placement is generated, which means no planning ahead. Even if we know a month in advance, we are recommending placement we still must wait until

after the placement happens to begin drafting a 20–30-page document, despite much of the info being available. Even worse when it's for multiple children.”

- “Updating client information, phone, address, email- often the system gets very slow to do this especially when you have to update multiple people. It will spin after each click, the system will “jump” or spin to produce the new address or phone, the same issue with trying to click into down arrows that happens with the allegation tab.”
- “Entering case notes takes a colossal amount of time. We have two staff that will occasionally enter time activity/case notes, and they will go missing. Our SSIS team and DHS SSIS have not been able to pinpoint the issue as there is no way to know exactly when it disappears.”
- “There is no “MnCHOICES” program type, so these intakes get set up as “Child Welfare-General” or “Adult Services-General”. Once the Initial MnCHOICES assessment has been completed, the MnCHOICES workgroup is closed, as you cannot transition it from “Child Welfare or Adult Services” another program type such as “Development Disability” or “CADI”.
- “Trying to train staff is very challenging because the system is not intuitive. This causes a lot of time to be taken for training staff, then retraining when they still do things wrong cause they missed one simple step – I completed a training just the other day with a social worker that had been in two other counties and she didn’t know how to do simple things like look at the state search workgroups, fine example of how much gets missed.”
- “Sherburne is big enough that to attempt to complete all tasks; to be in compliance we have a lot of people involved in all the steps. But we are not big enough that we have dedicated staff to handle all the steps/tasks which results in a lot of coordination, causing room for errors, etc.”
- “If something is not correct, SSIS should give the warning immediately so the correction can be made rather than after a payment is made”

Statewide technology modernization is supported by the Sherburne County Board of

Commissioners. Every year, our elected officials hear requests for additional human services staff to do the work, which could be reduced if reporting and documentation requirements were simplified. The House Human Services budget bill includes \$40 million requested for modernizing SSIS. This investment, coupled with \$10 million appropriated in 2024, will allow Minnesota to draw down a federal match, positioning our state to replace this antiquated system. Investment in SSIS is a critical component of successful implementation of any new human services policies and could significantly help curb the need for additional staff.

I invite you to contact me if you have any additional questions regarding SSIS. Additionally, I want to extend an open invitation to you and/or any of your colleagues to come to Sherburne and see first-hand see a social worker document in the system. I am confident that you would clearly be able to see the need for this critical infrastructure investment.

Warmly,



Amanda Larson
Director, Sherburne County Health and Human Services
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Anoka County
HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

Community Social Services and Behavioral Health

April 27, 2025

Child Protection Task Force Members:

On behalf of Anoka County, we thank you for working to assemble proposals to address the needs of Minnesota's most vulnerable residents. In a state supervised, county administered system, our county workforce on the front lines of implementing federal, state and local policies and regulations. We recognize that state policymakers have difficult choices to make as you look at potential federal headwinds and a grim state economic outlook that overlays with increased demand for services to protect our most vulnerable residents and their families.

We would like to express our gratitude for dedicating the \$40 million requested for modernizing the Social Service Information System (SSIS). This investment, coupled with \$10 million appropriated in 2024, will allow Minnesota to draw down a federal match, positioning our state to replace this antiquated system. Notably, SSIS is the technology platform utilized for child protection. In recent years, we've seen renewed policy change in this area, with the county workforce unfortunately developing IT workarounds to implement the changes due to outdated infrastructure. We are grateful for the leadership and attention in this area and look forward to the day when workers are spending more time supporting children and families than completing data entry and administrative functions.

Investment in SSIS is a critical component of successful implementation of any new child welfare policies, including the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (The Act). We thank the Children and Families committee for its attention to addressing disproportionalities that exist in our child welfare system. We know that to successfully implement The Act across all 87 counties, there must be investments in expanded services and increased staffing with supports. Anoka County Child Protection workers struggle on a daily basis to balance data entry into the SSIS system that is over 25 years old and deliver the high quality of services needed by our families. As our system of care has grown more complex, the add-on's to SSIS to integrate these system changes have only led to frustration and wasted staff time. Work arounds are time consuming and at times, workers will lose case notes and reports, that then need to be rewritten.

We remain concerned that full implementation the of the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (The Act) in 2027 may be jeopardized if there is not a runway for counties to implement concrete services (like Community and Family Resource Centers) and build staffing capacity in advance of expectations for full implementation. We urge you to consider resources in advance of 2027 so that counties can be prepared for success. Additionally, with staffing and uniform implementation concerns in mind, we ask that you consider making case review and active effort reporting a state function, as opposed to a county responsibility.

In closing, we ask for your partnership with counties to build a child welfare system that meets the needs of our most vulnerable, by supporting the needed full funding (\$40 million) for SSIS.

Sincerely,

George Borrell, Director

Community Social Services & Behavioral Health Department

Meeting People's Needs Through Quality Services

Community Social Services & Behavioral Health

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April 28, 2025

Senator Bobby Joe Champion and Representative Dave Pinto, Chairs
Legislative Task Force on Child Protection
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Modernization of the Social Service Information System

Dear Senator Champion, Representative Pinto and Task Force members,

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), Minnesota Rural Counties (MRC) and the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) are united in strong support of efforts to modernize the Social Service Information System (SSIS). As a critical tool in child protection and family services, SSIS is long overdue for an upgrade. Its current, outdated infrastructure significantly hinders our ability to serve children and families effectively and contributes to preventable harm and systemic inefficiencies.

Frontline staff consistently report that SSIS is cumbersome, unintuitive and time-consuming—often requiring duplicate data entry, excessive navigation between screens and inefficient workflows that take valuable time away from direct engagement with children and families. The system is not only a barrier to timely case documentation and service coordination but also a major contributor to staff burnout and turnover. In a field already experiencing critical staffing shortages, this has an alarming ripple effect on the stability and quality of care families receive.

At the heart of child protection is the trust that we will respond swiftly and appropriately to children in crisis. Unfortunately, the current technology that supports this work impedes that ability. When systems are slow or crash unexpectedly, or when caseworkers must spend hours managing outdated interfaces, it is the children and families across Minnesota who will suffer the consequences. Delays in accessing necessary information and inability to connect important historical data points have real-life consequences—particularly for families already navigating trauma and instability.

Modernizing SSIS is not simply a technology upgrade—it is an operational imperative. An effective, streamlined system will not only reduce administrative burdens on staff but will also lead to better outcomes for families by allowing professionals to spend more time in the field and less time behind a screen. A modern SSIS will improve data quality, support compliance with state and federal mandates, and help us better monitor and address racial and socioeconomic disparities in our child welfare system.



www.mncounties.org



www.mica.org



www.macssa.org



www.mnruralcounties.org

We sincerely thank Chair West and Chair Kotyza-Witthuhn for including \$40 million one-time to fully modernize SSIS in the House children and families omnibus bill (HF 2436). We appreciate their leadership in prioritizing this critical component and encourage Senate and House leadership to prioritize this as they develop global budget targets and ensure that funding becomes a reality this session. Making full replacement a reality in the future will help retain skilled staff, improve service delivery and most importantly, better protect the well-being of children and families across the state.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to Minnesota's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

Angie Thies (AMC)

Matt Freeman (MACSSA)

Nancy Silesky (MICA)

Britta Torkelson (MRC)



Health & Human Services Division

Phone: (763) 689-1711 WIC: (763) 689-4212 Fax: (763) 689-9877

"Empowering residents to make healthy and safe choices to strengthen the well-being of our community."

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Jimmy Gordon
Minnesota House of Representatives
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: SSIS Investments

Dear Representative Gordon,

Thank you for your dedicated service and commitment to Minnesota's most vulnerable residents. I recognize the significant challenges facing policymakers as the legislative session draws to a close, particularly amidst a constrained budget environment and increasing demand for critical services. I am grateful for the opportunity to share perspective on why it is critical to make an investment of \$40 million dollars in modernization of Social Service Information System (SSIS).

SSIS serves as the foundation for our child protection and social services work, yet it has not kept pace with the evolving demands of policy or the needs of today's workforce. Despite well-meaning reforms in recent years, staff are frequently forced to create workarounds due to system limitations. Common issues include:

- **Slow load times and frequent freezing**, making even simple tasks like accessing case history or writing case plans take far longer than necessary.
- **Complex case plans**, such as out-of-home placement documentation, can take up to **eight hours** to complete due to system lag.
 - Staff typically spend **several hours daily on case notes alone**—not due to content demands, but because of system inefficiencies.
- The interface is **not user-friendly**, requiring navigation through multiple screens and tabs to enter basic information.
- **Redundant data entry** across case types increases the risk of documentation errors.
- The system **lacks spell-check** and is prone to formatting issues when copying from Word.
- **Printing issues** prevent many staff from accessing or sharing required documents.
- **Summary views and court reports** often take **15 minutes or more** to load.

Health and Human Services, Oakview Office Complex, 1700 E Rum River Drive S, Suite A, Cambridge, MN 55008
WIC, Oakview Office Complex, 1700 E Rum River Drive S, Suite J, Cambridge, MN 55008

- **Frequent error messages** require full computer restarts throughout the business day, further disrupting productivity.

In addition to these daily hurdles, we recently learned that out-of-home placement plans will soon be moved to a separate application because the current system cannot be updated quickly enough. While we are thankful for the responsiveness to the issue to do this work more quickly, this new tool will not integrate with the existing system, which means staff will need to manually enter the same information into two different platforms—adding more time and increasing the risk of error.

A modern, thoughtfully designed system would have a transformative impact for County staff across the entire State. It would:

- **Increase staff time with families** by reducing administrative tasks.
- **Boost efficiency** and service capacity without additional staffing.
- **Enable real-time data access** for better planning and decision-making.
- **Improve coordination** and communication across agencies.
- **Enhance interoperability** to streamline care, confirm eligibility, and track services.
- **Integrate case types** to flag connections (e.g., Child Protection and Children's Mental Health).

I appreciate your recognition of these challenges and your commitment to finding solutions. A modernized system would allow county teams across the entire State to focus more on supporting children and families—and less on navigating outdated technology. Thank you for your time, attention, and ongoing commitment to strengthening our human services infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Jodi Donnay
2025.04.25
16:55:50 -05'00'

Jodi Donnay, MA LMFT
Division Leader



April 25, 2025

Representative Pinto, Chair
Legislative Task Force on Child Protection
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Champion, Chair
Legislative Task Force on Child Protection
3401 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Social Services Information System (SSIS) Investments

Dear Chair Champion, Chair Pinto, and Legislative Task Force on Child Protection Members:

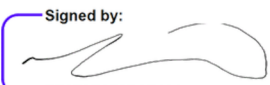
On behalf of Olmsted County, I write to respectfully urge you to support the \$40 million investment to improve SSIS that has been included in the House Children and Families Finance Bill. Combined with the \$10 million previously committed by the legislature, a \$50 Million investment would replace the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) portion of SSIS. In recent years multiple states have successfully replaced their CCWIS systems showing that viable commercial systems are available in the marketplace. Learning from the experiences of other states, we believe the full \$50 million would be needed to replace the system.

In Olmsted County we have tried to run managerial reports in SSIS and found the underlying table designs are inadequate and do not meet reasonable design practices to deliver necessary reports. As new rules and programs have been added, the structural issue has been exacerbated by new areas being added and efficiencies have dramatically decreased.

Overall system slowness, lack of interoperability, inability to electronically communicate with clients, inability to easily document in the field, inefficient forms design and forms data collection, and simple features such as spellcheck, autosaving, and streamlined data collection are all issues contributing to an inefficient and inadequate system where our staff spend more time case managing SSIS than they are able to spend supporting our most vulnerable clients.

Olmsted County respectfully urges the legislature to appropriate \$40 million for SSIS replacement this session. It is urgently needed and is an essential investment that will help counties better serve our most vulnerable individuals and families while they are in crisis and most dependent on accessing critical services. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions.

Sincerely,

Signed by:  4/25/2025 | 11:08 PM CDT
F5979F678D0F40A
Mark Thein, Chair
Olmsted County Board of Commissioners
mark.thein@olmstedcounty.org



Health & Human Services

Director

Jami Goodrum

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April 25, 2025

Senator John Hoffman

Co-Vice Chair, Legislative Task Force on Child Protection
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2111
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Full Funding of SSIS Investments

Dear Senator Hoffman and Members of the Task Force,

I am writing to express Wright County's strong support for fully funding the modernization of the Social Service Information System (SSIS) with the requested \$40 million in the Senate Health and Human Services (HHS) budget. While the proposed \$10 million allocation is a step in the right direction, it is insufficient to address the significant challenges our county faces due to the outdated SSIS infrastructure. Our social workers rely on SSIS daily to provide vital services to children and families. However, the inefficiencies and technological limitations of the current system hinder their ability to work efficiently and effectively. For example:

- Wright County Social Workers spend countless hours navigating redundant data entry processes, reducing the time they can dedicate to directly supporting and serving vulnerable children and families.
- The challenges of navigating SSIS only add to the burden social workers face, increasing their frustration as they balance overwhelming workloads, daily exposure to primary and secondary trauma, and relentless demands and scrutiny.
- SSIS frequently experiences system outages, or is slow, preventing workers from accessing and efficiently processing vital client data. These disruptions lead to delays in accessing critical child welfare information, putting vulnerable children and families at greater risk.

A modernized SSIS would drastically improve service delivery by:

- Streamlining intake and case management functions, reducing administrative burdens and duplicative data entry, and allowing social workers to focus on their primary mission - helping families rather than navigating slow technology.
- Enhancing data accuracy and communication between counties, ensuring more coordinated care for children in need.

I urge you to support the full \$40 million investment needed to upgrade SSIS, ensuring that our county and others across Minnesota can better serve children and families.

Thank you for considering this critical funding request—I appreciate your leadership and commitment to strengthening child welfare services in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jami Goodrum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jami Goodrum, Director
Wright County Health & Human Services



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Jennifer Castillo, Director
Beth Pierce, Deputy Director

April 24, 2025

Dear Senator Housley,

I am writing to express the critical need to support full funding of \$40 million to modernize the Social Service Information System (SSIS). In the current state, SSIS has become a daily barrier to performing even the most routine tasks.

Staff are routinely forced to create lengthy workarounds for basic functions—such as printing documents—which now require multiple, unintuitive steps. System glitches frequently result in lost work with no recovery options, compelling social workers to draft documentation outside of SSIS before copying it in, effectively doubling their workload and wasting critical time. Supervisors, likewise, face significant challenges in providing timely oversight due to the system's slow and cumbersome design. Every action requires excessive time and effort, drawing attention away from supporting families and ensuring safety and stability.

To compensate, staff have begun creating informal guides and “cheat sheets” just to complete tasks that should be simple. Navigating hidden screens, resolving unsolvable errors, and relying on time-consuming help desk escalations have become daily realities. In many cases, seasoned supervisors take on tasks themselves rather than attempt to explain the overly complex steps to new staff. There is little that is intuitive about SSIS, and it is contributing to burnout and inefficiency across the workforce.

Investment in SSIS is needed to effectively implement any new child welfare policies. Without proper funding for modernization, our social workers are being pulled away from what matters most: engaging with and supporting individuals and families in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Amundson".

Sarah Amundson, LICSW
Division Manager, Washington County Community Services

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Castillo".

Jennifer Castillo
Community Services Director

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promote a safe, healthy, and welcoming community for all.*

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Washington County is an equal opportunity organization and employer



April 25, 2025 Senator Bobby Joe Champion, Chair

Representative Dave Pinto, Chair

Legislative Task Force on Child Protection

Minnesota Capitol, Room 123

75 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Pinto and Champion, and task force members,

On behalf of the Dakota County Board of Commissioners, I want to thank you for the task force's work to protect the welfare of Minnesota's children. We share that mission in Dakota County. As policymakers and advocates discuss how to best deliver services and measure outcomes, the professionals delivering those services are struggling with outdated technology that stifles progress.

Dakota County wants to be a partner in building a better child protection system. The Social Service Information System that exists today does not support your vision. SSIS is the foundation for child protection and social service work, but it has not kept pace with the evolving demands of policy or the needs of our workforce. As good policy changes have been enacted over the years, county workers have been forced to create workarounds because of system limitations.

Social workers are professionals trained to work with families to help stabilize and transform lives. The current SSIS technology forces them to spend several hours on every case. Rather than working directly with more families, they navigate complex screens to enter case notes and complete redundant data entry. It's an inefficient, non-intuitive user experience wasting valuable staff time.

A modern, thoughtfully designed technology platform is the foundation needed to implement policy changes and improve the child protection and family social services system. Investing in this improvement would allow workers to spend more time with families instead of on administrative tasks, give us the ability to serve additional families without increasing staff and provide better coordination and tracking of services and outcomes.

We are pleased that the full request of \$40 million to replace SSIS is in the House omnibus Children and Families Finance bill (HF 2436). That is the amount needed to unlock the federal funding match to complete this project. This is the session to make this long overdue investment. Thank you for your commitment to Minnesota's families and children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Slavik".

Mike Slavik, Chair

Dakota County Board of Commissioners

County Board of Commissioners

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A Dakota County Administration Center • 1590 Highway 55 • Hastings • MN 55033





Wadena County Human Services

124 1st Street SE / Wadena, MN 56482 / 218-631-7605 / FAX: 218-631-7616

4/25/2025

Child Protection Task Force
Representative Krista Knudsen

Dear Representative Knudsen:

On behalf of Wadena County, I am requesting your support to fully fund the \$40 million requested and dedicated to modernizing the Social Services Information System (SSIS) in Minnesota. As you are well aware, the present system is antiquated and as such prevents county social services agencies from being as productive and efficient as possible. The current system contributes to work outages as it is prone to kicking workers out of the system. It is slow and contributes to needed data being lost. This prevents workers from spending more time with the children and families they support as they need to recreate data.

Before we can implement the new legislation related to the Minnesota African America Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (The Act), we need to have an updated technological infrastructure to meet statutory requirements. This legislation involves excessive data entry requirements and we cannot meet the auspices of this legislation without a modernized system.

Implementation of a new data system is a collaborative effort between counties, the Department of Human Services, and the legislature which will allow residents in our great state to be better served. It will allow county staff the ability to spend more time face-to-face with clients contributing to improved outcomes for families. It will also likely improve worker tenure as the current SSIS system is identified as one of the reasons Child Protection Social Workers leave the field.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you. If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Westrum, MS, LP
Interim Wadena County Administrator/HR Director/
Wadena County Human Services Director