March 29, 2016

Representative Matt Dean

Minnesota House of Representatives

Health and Human Services Finance Committee

**RE: HF 559 Medical assistance (MA) income eligibility limit, asset limits and excess income standard for blind, disabled and elderly increase.**

Dear Representative Dean and members of the committee:

The Minnesota Association of Senior Nutrition Services writes in support of HF 559 and proposed reforms to the Medical Assistance spend-down. We are an association of Senior Nutrition providers across the state who come together to collaborate, share best practices, and advocate on policy impacting congregate dining and home delivered meals for Minnesota seniors.

Congregate dining and home delivered meals enable persons aged 60 and older to live healthier, more active and independent lives. The overall goal of the Senior Nutrition Program is to delay or prevent unnecessary institutionalization of older adults.

In 2014, our members across the state served 2,295,857 meals to area older adults in Minnesota. Of those meals, 599,010 were served under the waiver programs. Our services are predominantly provided by volunteers.

Absorbing the cost of unpaid spend-downs is an incredible hardship for providers that already operate on a very thin margin due to the rising cost of food and other factors. **In 2014, our members absorbed $94,410.96 due to the inability to collect these payments from seniors.** Most seniors served live on very limited incomes, and when an older adult is unable to pay the spend-down, the need for nutritious meals continues.

We welcome and encourage your support for spend-down reform that will help older adults to remain in their homes longer and sustain a stable future for services to older adults.

Sincerely,

Andrea Lingl
President, MN Association of Senior Nutrition Services

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