January 31, 2023

Chair Noor and Members of the Human Service Finance Committee,

Reach for Resources, Inc. empowers people of all-abilities to reach their full potential. We do this by providing individualized services that maximize independence, boosts community engagement and improves physical and mental well-being. Each year we serve over 1,300 children, families, and adults across Minnesota in the areas of adaptive recreation, employment supports, inclusion, independent living supports, housing supports, counseling, mental health services and waiver case management.

Our organization works hard to meet the needs of those we serve. Yet, employees are not paid sufficiently, to provide these important supports to our state’s most vulnerable individuals. Our organization has worked hard to increase employees’ wages in order to retain the great talent we already have and to recruit additional employees in an environment where everyone is struggling to hire. We have not been able to hire a Community Living Specialist, someone who directly supports individuals with intellectual disabilities, at $18/hr (starting pay) for over 17 months. We have over 60 people on this service’s waitlist, as well as, many others we haven’t been able to provide support staff to. These people have access to the waiver and services, however there are no service providers for them to work with due to staffing.

Hence, why our industry is struggling with an ever increasing workforce shortage and reimbursement rates that do not support the provided services along with competitive wages for our employees. We are asking for your support in making long-term sustainable investments in the DWRS system. Without a sustainable, long-term increase for disability services, many service providers will be forced to shut down and individuals will not be able to receive the supports they so desperately need. Many may be forced into congregate living for their care and services. Limited or no investment into the DWRS system will dramatically impact our ability along with the entire industry’s ability, to continue to provide the same scope and level of supportive services individuals seek to live independently in their community. All individuals desire and deserve independent housing, employment, reliable transportation, community access, and connection with their family & friends.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kate Bottiger
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