

March 1, 2023

Re: Letter of Support for HF 1434

To: Members of the House Human Services Policy Committee

Dear Chair Fischer and Committee Members,

My name is Robyn Churchill. I live in House District 50A with my husband and three children. My youngest son has complex medical needs and a developmental disability which qualify him for MA TEFRA. On behalf of our family and the over 6000 families who pay MA TEFRA parental fees, I'm asking for your support of HF 1434 which seeks to eliminate the parental fee for MA TEFRA. MN is one of only five states with this disability tax on individuals and their families. We can do better than this. I found it appalling to learn that the fees paid by families are directed to the state's general fund where there is a record surplus and not to the Department of Human Services budget where the expenses related to MA and waiver services are incurred.

Due to his complex medical needs, my son qualifies for skilled nursing in our home. This is paid by our primary insurance policy. There is a policy limit to this of 270 days a year. At day 271, the challenges that required nursing support in our home did not go away for my son. State law requires private insurance to cover skilled nursing beyond the plan policy benefit for children who have secondary Medical Assistance. We were forced to go on Medical Assistance so that my son would not lose nursing in our home at day 271.

When I called the county to begin the process, the county worker questioned why we were applying due to the high fee she anticipated for us. She recommended that I connect with the state's parental pay department. It was there that I learned of a reconciliation process that would not require us to pay the fee until an analysis was complete of costs incurred for the year. I asked where I could read more about this and she could not direct me to documentation. This is an example of an incredibly frustrating and difficult to navigate system. I have met many families who do not access MA TEFRA because they are unaware of this reconciliation process. They do not want to prepay for costs that they do not incur.

The high parental fee remains a barrier to my child accessing the full level of services he needs. We are currently not accessing any waiver services because our parental pay would be more than what the waiver services would be. These services are critical to meeting the goals of the MN Olmstead Plan which focus on Minnesota being a place where people with disabilities are living in the most integrated setting. For my son, this is his home and not a hospital.

Now is the time to eliminate this fee and I appreciate your consideration of this important matter and ask for your support of HF 1434.

Kind regards,
Robyn Churchill