



February 22, 2021

Dear Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee;

On behalf of the Minnesota Rural Health Association (MRHA), thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on the future of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) in Minnesota. MRHA is a non-profit, member-based organization missioned to strengthen the health, health care and well-being of rural Minnesotans. Keeping true to our mission we believe access to health care, including transportation, is a top priority for rural communities.

Rural Minnesotan's have faced challenges "getting to" their medical appointments for years. Coupling long distances with the lack of public transportation options and provider networks built on fee-for-service models, options have always been limited. The stress placed on the rural community, the rural provider and the rural health care system is real, and COVID-19 has only made this worse. We believe that NEMT wheelchair van provider volumes have been cut in half because of their clients not traveling to medical appointments. We believe this is a poor time to eliminate funding as proposed in the Governor's most recent budget recommendations.

In the FY2022-23 Governor's Budget Recommendations, January 2021 Governor Walz also recommends moving to a uniform administration of NEMT services in the Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare programs. The NEMT industry has a history of attempting to implement uniform administration, or brokering, with little success. We believe history will only repeat itself.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Overview of Nonemergency Medical Transportation Services includes the following description of NEMT: *NEMT provides Medical Assistance (MA) members with the safest, most appropriate, and cost-effective mode of transportation to get to and from nonemergency medical service appointments.* If our current system is safe, appropriate, and cost effective; why change it? We ask that the legislature support our rural communities by enhancing supporting services, not eliminating them.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark T. Jones".

Mark T. Jones
Executive Director
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