



May 11, 2022

Senator Jim Abeler
Senator Paul Utke
Senator Michelle Benson
Senator Mark Koran
Senator John Hoffman

Representative Tina Liebling
Representative Jennifer Schultz
Representative Aisha Gomez
Representative Dave Pinto
Representative Tony Albright

RE: Comments on SF4100 - Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Health and Human Services omnibus bill. Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) is grateful for your ongoing efforts to recommend and implement policy that provides practical solutions and strengthens resources for our neighbors.

LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees and 10,000 volunteers serving 1 in 65 Minnesotans every year. We are committed to innovative, person-centered service delivery that promotes resiliency and long-term stability for people in all stages of life.

We support policies that improve access to service, build community connection, and remove barriers to health and well-being for our neighbors. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share comments on the following provisions.

Developing a Life Sharing Service Model. Thank you for the inclusion of engaging stakeholders and the Department of Human Services to develop recommendations for establishing Life Sharing as a covered medical assistance waiver service. This work is critical to removing barriers and increasing access to this person-centered, community-based and culturally responsive support for Minnesotans with disabilities. **We support both House and Senate language.**

Shelter-Linked Mental Health Grants. Investing in shelter-linked mental health will support community-based providers to offer a continuum of integrated services. LSS has seen first-hand that these funds are critical to breaking through the barriers and stigma associated with traditional mental health services. **Please accept the House language.**

Modifying the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS). Refining the DWRS by implementing regular adjustments to the Competitive Workforce Factor (CWF) is an important, long-term solution to reduce the wage gap between direct support professionals (DSPs) and comparable occupations. Additionally, this updates the timing of data utilized, which is an important step towards making the DWRS a better reflection of market costs. This progress is critical to allow providers to adapt and be responsive to market conditions. **Please accept the Senate language.**



Strengthening the Home and Community-Based Workforce. We strongly support policies that invest in community-based nonprofits to recruit, retain and develop the social service and caregiving field. **Please accept the House proposal** to establish workforce incentive grants to fund education, child care, and transportation which will result in growth and career advancement within the human services field.

Strengthening the Mental Health Workforce. We strongly support policies that eliminate systemic barriers and diversify our workforce to better meet the growing mental health needs of Minnesotans. These provisions are a critical step to ensuring that our workforce and mental health care system is meeting the needs of Minnesota's diverse communities by removing barriers and creating equitable pathways to the mental health profession. **Please accept the House proposals** to recruit, retain and strengthen a diverse mental health workforce by establishing supervision grants, workforce relief, scholarship grants, a loan forgiveness program and other investments that support the growing mental health needs of all Minnesotans.

Increasing Investment in Homeless Youth Act Grants and Safe Harbor Grants. Making updates and new investments in these grants will strengthen resources for programs that effectively and holistically support the needs of resilient youth experiencing homelessness or sexual exploitation. **Please accept the House position to increase funding and the Senate position to establish a provider repair and improvement grant program.**

LSS is thankful for your thoughtful leadership and support of neighbors helping neighbors. If we can be of service or provide additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Erin Sutton
Senior Director of Advocacy
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
erin.sutton@lssmn.org
c: 612-708-5703

Jeru Gobeze
Advocacy Manager
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
jeru.gobeze@lssmn.org
c:651-969-2292