



April 7, 2022

Dear Chair Schultz:

On behalf of AMC, MACSSA, and MICA, we write to provide county perspective on the proposed omnibus human services finance and policy bill (HF4579), as reflected in the A22 amendment.

**Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA):** Counties appreciate the commitment to continue forward action on the implementation of FFPSA which is an opportunity to move toward a more equitable delivery of child welfare services in Minnesota. We support provisions in HF4579 to fund a qualified individual program and continuous improvement. We are hopeful that these investments will help the state meet the evaluation, fidelity monitoring, and continuous quality improvement requirements and allow the state to begin receiving the Title IVE 50% reimbursement for prevention services associated with FFPSA.

As discussions on an omnibus bill continue, we look forward to working with legislators to further address the needs of local governments relative to the implementation of FFPSA. We hope that you will consider funding for local continuous improvement needs and increased access to placement prevention programming so that counties can confidently push to meeting the state's prevention plan goals.

**Working families:** We very much appreciate HF4579 bringing forward elements of Gov. Walz's supplemental budget request to stabilize working families. We believe the small changes to calculating benefits under the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) will help address the benefits cliff that hinder working parents from fully entering the workforce. Aligning MFIP requirements and timelines with other assistance programs will bring stability for families, reduce county administrative time, and support consistent workforce outcomes.

**Child wellbeing:** Counties support many provisions in the bill investing in our children. We support investments in our current child welfare prevention system, including grants for Parent Support Outreach Program, Family Group Decision Making, Family Assessment Response, and Parent Mentors. Thank you for including grants to counties and tribes to lower caseloads and support youth exiting foster care. We also support investments in culturally responsive programming that addresses the needs of our African American and Native American populations that we know are most impacted by our child protection system. Finally, we appreciate the attention to investing in youth who are transitioning from foster care. We appreciate working with legislators to address these youth while also recognizing the complexities of implementing trusts.

**Opioid epidemic response:** Counties support the recent work of the Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC) and this bill's alignment with the national opioid settlement. Counties are committed to leveraging these resources to proactively abate substance use disorders through public health prevention, jail addiction treatment, and supporting children and families.

**Homelessness:** Counties support direct investments in emergency shelters and increased assistance for homelessness prevention programs. Across the state, we see increased homelessness and its detrimental effects on families and communities. Thank you for including more than \$75 million in emergency shelter facilities grants and \$85 million for emergency services grants over the next three years to address the immediate needs of individuals as counties work tirelessly to move individuals and families out of shelters and into sustainable homes.

We also thank you for including an expansion of the Metro Housing Demo by adding Carver, Scott and Washington counties and additional housing units. The purpose of the Metro Demo is to strategically expand and update a 1995 demonstration project in Housing Support, formerly known as Group Residential Housing (GRH). Many homeless individuals have challenges with mental health and substance abuse issues. This language will help to strategically create resources to provide needed housing with services in the most cost-effective way.

**Service Delivery Transformation Continuation:** Counties support investing \$77.5 million in modernization efforts to support continued efforts to transform the human service delivery system toward an integrated, streamlined, person-centered experience for those accessing human services programs. Modernization efforts at the state level in recent years have not kept pace with the rapidly changing technology and service environment and haven't sufficiently incorporated the user perspective and feedback from county staff. This much-needed investment, implemented under the guidelines developed and defined by Gartner's Go Forward Recommendations, prioritizes an integration platform ecosystem – that includes counties and tribes – and recognizes the need for a shift to an agile approach to systems development. We support advancing projects that improve user experience and reduce administrative burden for both clients and workers. This effort needs to ensure co-ownership, collaboration, coordination and transparency with counties and tribes when executing an updated modernization road map and when introducing new technology for county and tribal use. It is essential we make investments at the state now and that we also look toward funding and implementing local county innovation efforts.

**While we much appreciate these investments, we also have concerns with investments not included in the bill.**

**Adult Mental Health Initiative Grants:** Counties are incredibly disappointed that this proposal does not include consideration of Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI) grants. This funding has been critical to holding together our fragile and fractured mental health system. At a time when some regions are poised to see reduced resources as part of a funding formula redesign, counties feel strongly that without sustainable funding we may see many more individuals and families fall into devastating gaps in our system, pushing them into crisis situations. We respectfully ask that you consider policy language and funding that moves these grants more clearly into our state's mental health infrastructure and, at a minimum, holds regions standing to lose dollars harmless from future cuts.

We appreciate your work to assemble an omnibus bill that reflects the needs of Minnesotans at a time of historic surplus. We thank you for your time and appreciate your consideration of our feedback. Please consider us as resources as you continue this work as budget discussions progress.

Sincerely,



Julie Ring, Executive Director  
Association of Minnesota Counties



Matt Massman, Executive Director  
Minnesota Inter-County Association



Matt Freeman, Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of County Social Service  
Administrators