



April 7, 2021

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee:

**On behalf of MACSSA, AMC and MICA, we write to provide feedback on several proposals included in the committee's omnibus bill.** We echo the sentiments shared by LPHA in their letter, and focusing on human services, counties greatly appreciate your support of many provisions in this bill, in particular provisions included in Articles 1, 7 and 8.

**County Support:**

**HF1822:** Peacetime Emergency waivers and modifications issued by the Department of Human Services (DHS) have permitted county staff to change the delivery method of services without sacrificing service quality by doing such things as conducting client meetings via video and processing enrollment paperwork remotely. The result of the waivers thus far is that residents experience limited disruption in their county benefits and they have more choices on how they can interact with counties and our community partners.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, counties have learned some best practices and believe that some of the waivers and modifications issued by DHS and supported by the Legislature demonstrate a better, more efficient way to deliver services; promote the safety and well-being of county clients and staff; and may have the added benefit of preserving limited state and county resources. Counties evaluated the current COVID-19 waivers and advocate that four of these modifications be codified in statute. Three of these are included in Article 7 of this bill and a fourth is included in the House Human Services bill.

We greatly appreciate the inclusion of provisions from HF1822 that 1) allow individuals to apply and attend orientation remotely for MFIP, 2) allow certain MnCHOICES reassessments to be conducted remotely, and 3) allow for certain targeted case management visits to be conducted remotely.

**Telehealth:** Counties have been utilizing telehealth for many years and find it to be a very useful tool. Since COVID, it literally has become a lifeline as we have been able to conduct more frequent case management visits utilizing this technology. While not intended to replace face-to-face visits, we see telehealth as a supplement to how we serve our clients.

We support the proposal to lift the maximum number of three telehealth visits per week. However, we also see the need for uniformity and believe that guardrails do need to be put in place to ensure that quality and quantity are addressed. We are also concerned that some clients do not have access to technology, including broadband service, or the ability to manage these types of visits. Investment in the state's broadband infrastructure is a critical piece to this discussion.

**Background Studies:** In pursuit of ensuring access to vendors in their local areas, a number of counties have participated as vendors for fingerprinting services required in NetStudy 2.0. Counties appreciate the ability for the state to retain the services of more than one authorized fingerprint collection vendor to assist in ensuring adequate access to these services across the state.

**County Concerns:**

**Proposed Benefit Carve-Outs:** Counties would echo the concerns raised by Minnesota's County Based Purchasing (CBP) plans about some of the carveouts of PMAP benefits in the bill that originate from the Governor's budget proposals. Counties recognize that centralizing some services and carving out certain benefits from inclusion in managed care plans in pursuit of efficiencies and cost savings is a laudable goal for the state; however, we have concerns that if not properly managed, this may cause confusion for residents and lead to compromised service quality. This approach also seems contrary to our goals of moving towards more integrated services. If not managed properly,

counties have concerns about carveouts such as those proposed for Dental, Pharmacy and Nonemergency Medical Transportation.

As always, we thank you for your time and appreciate your hearing the collective county voice. We look forward to working with you as budget discussions continue.

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