

April 7, 2022

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

RE: The Finance and Policy Omnibus Bill (HF4579 A22)

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center is a statewide non-profit organization that provides support and advocacy services to victims of elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. Since our founding in 2014, we have partnered with county Adult Protection Service (APS) agencies and the Department of Human Services to improve our APS system and modernize our Vulnerable Adult Act.

We strongly support the policy proposals in Article 6 sections 28-40. These changes represent the first phase of critical updates that our state needs to address critical gaps in our current system. Since the Vulnerable Adult Act was written over 40 years ago, we know much more about how to serve older and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. We look forward to continued updates as stakeholders work to bring forward solutions that ensure vulnerable adults living in the community are protected when they face abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.

We are also supportive of the investments to address the staffing crisis in long term care, and the broad investments in home and community-based services which are designed to keep older and vulnerable adults in their own homes. When older and vulnerable adults have access to in-home services, home delivered meals, and other services to address their mental and physical needs, they are at reduced risk of maltreatment in the community.

While we applaud these changes, we note the need for further investment in our APS system. Historically, our state and federal governments have underfunded county adult protection (especially in comparison to child protection) and it has left our older and vulnerable adults behind. In July of 2021, [DHS released a report detailing the APS case acceptance process](#) that we believe is a call to action. It tells us that: (1) Minnesota lags behind the rest of the country in providing APS services to vulnerable adults; and (2) racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with chemical dependency issues are screened out of services at higher rates than other vulnerable adults.

Therefore, we encourage adding APS investments to this budget bill. The **pilot projects created in Representative Noor's bill HF3852** would help develop creative solutions to the long-standing inequity issues within the system so as to better shape DHS's Adult Protection redesign process in future years.

In addition, we also believe **it is critical to invest in our senior nutrition program as proposed in Representative Moller's bill HF4633**, which will help reduce senior hunger and isolation – another key risk factor of maltreatment.

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center plans to continue to work with lawmakers, counties, and DHS to address structural inequities with our APS systems, so that APS can provide better protective and supportive services to vulnerable adults, many of whom are older adults, living in their own homes in the community.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda Vickstrom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Vickstrom
Executive Director
Minnesota Elder Justice Center