

March, 22, 2022

Senate Finance Committee

Chair Julie A Rosen

Re: SF2786

Dear Committee,

I am Char Christenson, Hubbard County Commissioner, and representing Minnesota Rural Counties. Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

Hubbard County owns a long term care facility in Park Rapids. Currently we are running at an average loss of \$150,000 per month due to our census being at 50% which is because of staffing shortages. The county has so far given the facility \$2m from our ARPA dollars to keep the doors open and there is no end in sight for continual monthly running in the red. Our commissioner board has some tough decisions to make about the future of our facility if we cannot turn the census around. There are people waiting to move in but cannot due to staffing shortages.

Currently there are 364 long term care facilities across the state of MN with a staffing shortage of 23,000 workers to cover all the open positions. (Note these staffing shortages are just for the state of MN.) This bill offers incentive for people to work in the senior services sector. While we appreciate and support this bill we do so with caution as it will not fix the staffing problem for the senior services sector. The CMS mandates created much of this mess and they have done nothing to fix the problem they created. Throwing money without fixing the mandates will not be a long term solution. Moral is at an all-time low. Many have left the health care industry out of exhaustion and/or frustration with the mandates.

In addition to this bill CMS needs to drop the mandates, trust needs to be rebuilt between the industry and workers, hourly wages need to increase which means you, the legislative body, need to increase reimbursement rates for Medicare and Medicaid. The senior services sector cannot give adequate hourly wage increases operating at a loss or near loss.

Thank you for your time and I encourage you to bring forth additional support for the senior services care sector. This is a huge population and if service sectors close their doors there will be a much larger crisis to try and solve in addition to a severe disruption to people's lives who depend on the needed care.

Respectfully,

Char Christenson

Hubbard County Commissioner

