

April 6, 2022

Senator Julie Rosen
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
2113 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: S.F. 4091 Omnibus Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy Bill

Dear Senator Rosen,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate File 4091, the Jobs and Economic Growth Omnibus bill.

First, I appreciate that the bill includes the \$175,000 appropriation for the police officer, firefighter, and state trooper benefit adequacy study. As the bill language requires a study of workers' compensation, disability, and pension benefits, and DLI's expertise is only in workers' compensation, the agency will need to partner with a consultant on this study, which the appropriation will fund.

Second, the department suggests the \$50,000 appropriation in Article 1 Section 2 for a grant to an organization to provide equine experiential mental health therapy to first responders is better allocated to the commissioner of public safety as in Senate File 3615 as introduced. This type of therapy is not covered under PTSD treatment parameters for purposes of a workers' compensation claim and could create confusion if related to a claim for an injured worker.

Third, the department has concerns with provisions in Article 2 that seek to amend the employee notification and penalty provisions of the wage theft law. While some provisions are clarifications of how the agency has interpreted current law and are therefore not needed, others we object to as they undermine the purpose of the law to better inform workers of the conditions of their employment, prevent wage theft, and ensure workers are paid the wages they have earned.

Fourth, I regret that Senate File 4091 does not include the paid family and medical leave insurance program recommended by the Governor. A comprehensive paid family and medical leave program would provide Minnesotans economic stability and needed time away from work to welcome a new family member, care for an aging loved one, or recover from an illness or injury. Current unpaid leave laws are woefully inadequate, as many workers don't qualify and those who do simply can't afford to take extended unpaid time off work for caregiving responsibilities. Paid family and medical leave would ease the financial burden on families during significant life events.

Regarding the Labor and Industry proposals in the A-5 amendment to Senate File 4091, I am disappointed that the amendment includes only a \$25,000 one-time increase to the Youth Skills Training Program (YST). The department recommends a \$747,000 increase in FY23 and similar amounts ongoing to fund additional partnership in the state and provide administrative support for the program. This year, the agency received 32 proposals totaling \$2.9 million in requests for YST grant funding, three times the amount of funding available. Additional funding would enable the agency to support additional Youth Skills Training partnerships to offer safe, healthy and meaningful work experience to 16- and 17-year-old student learners.

The department's other supplemental budget priorities are also missing from the amendment. These omissions will inhibit the agency's ability to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

- **Increasing funding for registered apprenticeship and the LEAP grant** to establish a separate Apprenticeship Division within DLI and increase the participation of women, people of color, and Indigenous people in registered apprenticeship programs;
- **Additional funding for prevailing wage enforcement** to ensure that persons working on public works are compensated according the real value of the services they perform;
- **Improving energy efficiency in commercial and large multi-family buildings** to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change;
- **Providing the agency regulatory oversight of assisted living facilities** and assisted living with dementia care facilities to ensure these facilities designed for the elderly and vulnerable adults meet minimum safety standards;
- **Providing a two-year license fee holiday** to provide economic relief to 87,000 building and construction trades professional licensees;
- **Keeping Minnesota OSHA penalties in line with federal OSHA** for employers that fail to provide safe and healthy workplaces for their workers to ensure continued federal funding and encourage employers to take workplace safety and health violations more seriously;
- **Requiring accrual of earned sick and safe time** so Minnesotans don't have to make the difficult choice between caring for themselves or a loved one or paying their bills;
- **Strengthening fair labor standards for agricultural and food processing workers** to expand protections and build awareness of workplace rights;
- **Better protecting combatant safety and health** through regulatory changes to the Office of Combative Sports.

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Finally, regarding the policy provisions in the amendment, the department appreciates the work to engage stakeholders on the window cleaning anchor and elevator contractor provisions to achieve consensus. The department commits to continuing to work to find resolution on these issues and looks forward to continued discussion on the proposal to exempt load management devices from inspections. The Minnesota Plumbing Board unanimously objected to the backflow prevention provisions in the amendment, as exempting this work from licensure requirements has the potential to compromise safe drinking water.

Thank you for the consideration. I look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roslyn C. Robertson". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Roslyn C. Robertson
Commissioner

cc: Senator John Marty, Ranking Minority Member, Finance Committee
Senator Eric Pratt, Chair, Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy Committee
Senator Bobby Joe Champion, Ranking Minority Member, Jobs and Economic Growth
Finance and Policy Committee
Senator Jason Rarick, Chair, Labor and Industry Policy Committee
Senator Jennifer McEwen, Ranking Minority Member, Labor and Industry Policy Committee