



March 24, 2022

To: Members of the Senate Human Services Reform and Finance Committee

RE: Senate File 4165

Dear Chair Abeler and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in response to SF 4165, the Senate Human Services Reform Policy Omnibus bill. We write on behalf of The Arc Minnesota and the Minnesota Disability Law Center.

Thank you so much, Chair Abeler and members, for the attention you have brought to the dire and pressing workforce crisis in disability services. This crisis is impacting people across Minnesota and jeopardizing access to services and supports for individuals with disabilities. Throughout this session, you have heard many ideas on how we as a state can resolve the crisis and this bill is an obvious effort to address this important issue.

Thank you especially for including language that will permit people who live in their own homes to have the right to appeal service terminations (Article 3, Sections 5 and 9). This change will ensure people living in their own homes have the same appeal rights as those in provider-controlled settings. We are grateful for this committee's commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities have real options to choose to live in their own homes, and this change addresses a current imbalance in appeal rights.

There are many other provisions in this bill that we can imagine are the result of efforts to address the workforce crisis. Amidst this workforce shortage, it is critically important to maintain focus on supporting people to live in their own homes with family, roommates, partners, spouses, or independently. Informed choice about, access to, and resources that support these individualized options are called for by Olmstead and by people who have disabilities across Minnesota. There are provisions in this bill that we have questions and concerns about with regard to this focus, and we look forward to ongoing conversations about how to best address the current crisis in light of our state's commitments to informed choice and inclusion.

Additionally, the Disability Law Center notes the inclusion of the proposal to create a Department of Behavioral Health. We have shared our questions and feedback regarding this proposal and look forward to ongoing discussions.

Thank you again for your dedication to addressing our state's workforce shortage. Thank you for taking the time to listen to people most impacted – people with disabilities – and for your demonstrated commitment to addressing the issues brought forward. Our organizations are eager to continue working

with you and others in advancing solutions to the current shortage using innovative, forward-thinking, and individualized approaches. Thank you so much for your commitment to Minnesotans who have disabilities and your work in putting this bill together.

Sincerely,

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