

April 5, 2022

Dear Chair Abeler and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Senate Human Services Reform Omnibus Spending Bill, Senate File 4410.

For many months, ARRM and our members have shared the catastrophic impact the workforce shortage has had on people with disabilities, and on the care and support they receive. We are deeply grateful to this committee for their thoughtful debate on ways to stand up and support these critical services.

Senate File 4410 will not fix every issue facing the disability services sector, but it is an important, positive step forward in addressing the issues that stand in the way of people with disabilities living their best lives. SF4410 will help to raise the wages of our workforce, enhance access to critical services and provide a safety net for services that are in crisis.

Thank you for including the following provisions in SF4410:

- Sustainable Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) framework investments, offering competitive wages for our Direct Support Professional workforce, assisting in the recruitment and retention of staff.
- Adjustments to ICF/DD rates and the creation of a rate floor for both Class A and Class B facilities.
- Including ARRM's language that removes Respite from DWRS, making it a market rate service. This change is a workforce solution that provides the tools providers need to develop services that meet the unique needs of their communities while supporting more than one person at a time.
- Adding additional funding for the Emergency Staffing Pool and extending the program by one year, as well as developing the Residential Settings Closure Prevention grants to support those services that are at risk of closure.
- Including the 'Life Sharing and Shared Service' language, supporting the development of services that offer creative solutions to the workforce shortage.

Disability services stands at a crossroads, and SF4410 sends a clear message that people with disabilities and Direct Support Professionals do not stand alone. ARRM and its residential provider members remain committed to being a resource for the chair and members of this committee.

Sincerely,

Sue Schettle, CEO

Sara Grafstrom, Director of State and Federal Advocacy

