

Minnesota State Senate
Human Services Reform Finance & Policy Committee
Chair – Sen. Abeler
Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Re: SF 4165 Committee Omnibus bill

Dear Mr. Chair and Members,

Many thanks for the opportunity to testify today. I have missed this committee's friendly faces. First, I want to thank Sen. Abeler again for helping us pass EIDBI benefit years ago. Because of your support, there are thousands of children with autism being served under the EIDBI benefit.

I am here today to ask you to keep your original goal of always ensuring there is broad stakeholder input in EIDBI which would include autism parents, families, advocates, and providers. Line 187.7 states "in a manner that is determined by the commissioner." Is it possible to add **(in collaboration with stakeholders)** This will ensure DHS is not deciding EIDBI services without getting input from families and providers. It has already been frustrating and difficult at DHS without Alex B there. I hope we make sure autism families are at the table with DHS and not on the table.

EIDBI Background: I thank Abeler and Liebling for adding background study to be done before staff have access to these vulnerable children last year. Sadly, again because Alex B is not there anymore, DHS has put our children in harms way. They have allowed staff to have access to these vulnerable children before their background study is completed. DHS is now using a new vendor who seems to not have enough times for appointments, is taking longer to process applications and costs more. Please tell DHS to not put our kids at risk. The person's background study must be cleared before they have access to the kids. What if (God Forbid) a child gets hurt? What then?

I heard this committee discussing comparable situation for childcare providers which I agreed with. No child should be put in harm's way because DHS cannot seem to find a good vendor to complete fingerprinting on-time.

Finally, I would like to raise awareness of an area that is under HCBS – **Environmental Accessibility Adaptation** (EAA) This is a waiver service for people with disabilities including autism. As our children get older, we want to ensure they are living in their homes and communities. Currently, there is no guidance from DHS for the counties. Essentially, we have 87 counties and 87 rules. The assessments and installation of home safety modifications have no check and balance. They can cost thousands with no oversight nor support from DHS who just lets the vendor decide. Vendors charge whatever they want, some even send their invoices after the fact without the family's input or even knowledge and the county just pay for it.

When I asked DHS if they can offer support to families, they said we can complain to the Better Business Bureau. I am sorry but what is BBB going to do about a publicly funded waiver program? Again, because there is no Alex B there, it is easier to pull your teeth without anesthesia than to have a reasonable conversation that ensures people with autism and other disabilities are supported by DHS.

I am hoping you can ask DHS about this and find a way to make this program one that is based on person-centered, quality work and is cost-effective.

I have attached what is in DHS' website for the EAA, as you can see there is no set rate and no guidance from DHS.

https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs-286680#

Thanks so much as always!

Idil Abdull – Somali Autism Mom & Advocate