



United Way of
Northeastern MN

Proudly Serving

- Alborn
- Angle Inlet
- Angora
- Aurora
- Babbitt
- Baudette
- Big Falls
- Biwabik
- Brimson
- Britt
- Brookston
- Buhl
- Buyck
- Canyon
- Cherry
- Chisholm
- Cook
- Cotton
- Crane Lake
- Culver
- Ely
- Embarrass
- Ericsburg
- Eveleth
- Floodwood
- Forbes
- Gheen
- Gilbert
- Hibbing
- Hoyt Lakes
- Indus
- Int'l Falls
- Iron
- Kabetogama
- Keewatin
- Kelly Lake
- Kinney
- Littlefork
- Loman
- Makinen
- Markham
- Meadowlands
- Mizpah
- Mt. Iron
- Nashwauk
- Nett Lake
- Northome
- Orr
- Palo
- Pengilly
- Rainer
- Ray
- Saginaw
- Side Lake
- Soudan
- Tower
- Virginia
- Williams
- Winton
- Zim

March 29, 2022

Chair Eric Pratt
95 University Ave. W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3219
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Chair Pratt and Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Committee members:

I am writing to you on behalf of United Way of Northeastern Minnesota (UWNEMN), an organization helping children succeed, empowering healthy lives, and stabilizing families and individuals cross the Iron Range, Koochiching County, and Lake of the Woods County, in support of SF3593.

UWNEMN provides direct service programs that fill critical gaps in northeastern Minnesota: feeding children on weekends, assisting local veterans in crisis, providing dental care to uninsured individuals, mentoring young children, mailing Imagination Library books, and providing home essentials to displaced families. In addition, we partner with more than 30 nonprofits in the region and provide financial support to all food shelves.

Non-profits are not immune from the stress the business community has faced in the last two years. In addition to rising costs, material shortages, and the complications of mitigating public health concerns while continuing to operate in a meaningful way, we have the added pressure of decreased fundraising capabilities while the needs for our services increase.

Federal funding in 2020 was pivotal for UWNEMN and its partner agencies keeping doors open to meet immediate needs like food, clothing, and shelter for northeastern Minnesota residents in serious crisis - and preventing residents from finding themselves in serious crisis. Thanks to federal support, we were able to provide funding to individuals unable to work, working reduced hours, or laid off due to the pandemic to keep them from the point of needing further services in the future. That funding was not repeated in 2021, though we faced the same challenges then as 2020; indeed we are still facing them today.

The lack of COVID-19 funds from our state legislature to date has been disappointing. We see our state legislators as valuable partners in improving the quality of life in northeastern Minnesota. We know legislators across Greater Minnesota fight to ensure communities outside the metro area are not forgotten at the state capitol, and we hope they will fight just as fiercely to ensure our rural non-profits are not forgotten as well.

Greater Minnesota non-profits like UWNEMN do not have access to the same funding sources or number of potential donors that metro area non-profits have access to, but the people we serve need just as much help and matter just as much as the people served by metro-area non-profits. The amount of funding made available specifically to Greater Minnesota non-profits in SF3593 will have a far greater impact than the non-profit relief fund in the Governor's current budget proposal.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or if you need more information, please contact me directly at 218-215-2431 or erin@unitedwaynemn.org.

Sincerely,

Erin Shay
Executive Director

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