DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

April 11, 2023

Senator John Marty
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3235 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: S.F. 2782 Omnibus Labor Finance and Policy Bill

Dear Senator Marty,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.F. 2782, the Omnibus Labor bill. The Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) is pleased the bill includes many of the Governor's budget priorities, as they support our economy, improve worker protections, and enable the agency to better meet the needs of the Minnesotans we serve.

I appreciate the inclusion of key provisions in the bill that support working families, such as:

- Investing in prevailing wage education and compliance, which helps ensure that projects funded with public money be constructed and maintained by the best means and highest quality of labor reasonably available and that people working on public works projects be compensated according to the real value of the services they perform
- Strengthening existing workplace protections for agricultural and food processing workers so that they are protected and aware of their rights
- Investing in outreach related to workplace rights and obligations under the women's economic security act

I also appreciate the inclusion of provisions in the bill that help address the current workforce challenges and develop a skilled and diverse workforce, such as:

- Increasing LEAP grants to better support participation and retention of women, people of color, and indigenous people in registered apprenticeship programs
- Increasing funds for youth skills training grants and administration to support more partnerships among school districts, employers and community organizations to offer meaningful work experience to 16- and 17-year-old student learners
- Separating the Division of Labor Standards and Apprenticeship into two separate divisions to best support program operations

I appreciate the provisions in the bill that help to protect Minnesotans' health and safety, including:

- Keeping MNOSHA penalties in line with federal OSHA for employers that fail to provide safe and healthy workplaces for their workers. This will ensure continued federal

funding and will encourage employers to comply with workplace safety and health standards

- Establishing a Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board responsible for setting minimum standards necessary to improve recruitment and retention and protect the health and welfare of nursing home workers
- Establishing a program and team within DLI to address workplace ergonomic injuries through training, education, and enforcement in the warehouse, meatpacking, and health care industries
- Providing ergonomics safety grants to employers to invest in specific equipment or practices that will reduce the risk of injury to employees and prevent musculoskeletal disorders
- Enabling DLI to provide construction code reviews and inspections of assisted living facilities statewide to ensure that facilities designed for the elderly and vulnerable adults meet minimum safety standards
- Modifying state building code requirement for window cleaning safety to incorporate safe window cleaning methods recognized by a national safety standard
- Making statutory changes to the Office of Combative Sports to better protect combatant health and safety

I appreciate the provisions in the bill that help to mitigate climate change, including:

- Instituting an adoption framework for the commercial energy code such that buildings can achieve an 80 percent reduction in annual net energy consumption compared to a 2004 baseline by 2036
- Adding requirements to the Minnesota state building code for electric vehicle charging infrastructure within or adjacent to new commercial and multifamily buildings
- Funding the growth of apprenticeship opportunities in clean economy occupations

I appreciate the inclusion of provisions that improve the department's ability to deliver quality services to our stakeholders, such as:

- Reducing certain construction codes and licensing fees to align more closely with services provided and allowing DLI to refund contractor recovery fund fees when an applicant does not receive a license
- Reorganizing how information technology costs are distributed at DLI so that each work unit pays for the resources that they use
- Providing additional funding to maintain the current level of service delivery at DLI and offset inflationary pressures.

Finally, I would like to advocate for the inclusion of the governor's full ask of $2 million in one-time funding for ergonomics safety grants. SF2782 provides $1.259 million ergonomics safety grant funding. This safety grant program provides financial assistance to employers who want to invest in the safety and health of their employees. Increasing ergonomics safety grants to $2 million allows the program to assist more employers in the purchase of equipment and practices

that will reduce the risk of injury and illness to employees and prevent musculoskeletal disorders.

DLI's goals in this budget are to support working families, develop a skilled and diverse workforce, protect Minnesotans' health and safety, work towards mitigating climate change, and improve service delivery at the agency. Thank you for supporting a bill that can help make these goals a reality.

Sincerely,

Nicole Blissenbach
Commissioner

cc: Senator Jennifer McEwen, Chair, Labor and Industry Finance and Policy Committee
    Senator Gene Dornink, Ranking Minority Member, Labor and Industry Finance and Policy
    Committee
   Senator Eric Pratt, Ranking Minority Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Nick Frentz, Vice Chair, Finance Committee
   Senator Bobby Joe Champion, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Gary Dahms, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Rich Draheim, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Zaynab Mohamed, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Justin Eichorn, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Erin Murphy, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Sandra Pappas, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Torrey Westrom, Member, Finance Committee
   Senator Melissa Wiklund, Member, Finance Committee