

Senator Melissa Wiklund
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Wiklund,

As Co-Chair of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Advisory Board, I am writing to you to urge your committee to confirm the reappointment of Jodi Harpstead as Commissioner of DHS.

Along with my fellow co-chair Dr. Penny Wheeler, I have had the privilege of working closely with Commissioner Harpstead since her initial appointment by Governor Walz. Our advisory board has met frequently since then, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, giving me the opportunity not only to hear all of her substantive reports to the board, but to observe closely her relationships with the Senate and House Committee chairs, both Democrats and Republicans along with the several community leaders on our board. In addition, we have spoken frequently by telephone, as she not only updated me on DHS's progress and sought advice and counsel on handling sensitive issues.

It is well known that when Commissioner Harpstead took the leadership of DHS, the department faced many very serious problems and was the object of criticism from both elected officials, Minnesota citizens, and the media. From the outset she took a systematic approach to addressing these problems, not just to ameliorate the immediate issues but to create permanent solutions by introducing sound systems throughout the department that serve all the citizens of Minnesota.

To do this was and is an extremely complex task, requiring skilled discipline leadership. To work with her toward these goals, Commissioner Harpstead rebuilt the entire leadership team at DHS, appointing very skilled professionals to run each area of the department.

In addition to her work internally at DHS, Commissioner Harpstead has done a remarkable job in working with the committee chairs on both the Senate and House committees, working seamlessly across the aisle with both Democrats and Republicans, making regular telephone calls to each chair during the periods of COVID-19 when in-person meetings were not possible.

She has worked tirelessly toward her goals and those of DHS, and has achieved great success as Commissioner.

For all these reasons, I urge you to confirm her reappointment as Commissioner of Department of Human Services.

Sincerely,

Bill George