

1/26/2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Senator Wiklund,

I am Penny Wheeler and have served as co-chair for the DHS Commissioner's advisory council over the past three years. I give Commissioner Jodi Harpstead the highest possible recommendation for her reappointment as Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS).

I have had an opportunity to see Commissioner Harpstead's leadership from a few angles—as a colleague, as an Advisory Council Co-chair, and as a health care leader. As a colleague, I first met her at in an intensive leadership cohort working to examine unconscious bias and work towards a more equitable community. Her commitment to the greater good and equity was palpable from our first meeting.

As a DHS Advisory Co-Chair, with Bill George, I have had an in depth look at all being done to improve processes and strategically position the department for the evolving needs of Minnesotans. The earnestness and professionalism she and her team have displayed have been remarkable. She fully engaged all four legislative chairs and a broad advisory group to make certain the departments actions were reviewed and needed feedback obtained. It takes time to put new processes in place, commitment and effective leadership. The positive culture at DHS and increasing trust in the department has resulted from Commissioner's Harpstead's broad experience, operational acumen, and compassionate approach. The outcomes for Minnesotans have been excellent. DHS is highly trusted based on her continuous unparalleled engagement and improvement efforts.

As a health care leader, I was often on the receiving end of policies DHS would put in place, either by legislative mandate or through the department's improvement efforts. I can unequivocally say, the Commissioner and her staff were always accessible, open to feedback, and would explain the rationale on decisions made. In so doing, health care providers across the state trust and support her leadership.

Commissioner Harpstead is an exceptional leader and well deserves re-appointment. The lives of Minnesotans are made better due to her outstanding leadership.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Wheeler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Penny Wheeler, M.D.
DHS Advisory Committee Co-Chair
Recent CEO, Allina Health