

From The Desk of
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Senator Melissa Wiklund
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg
Smith Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Wiklund,

I am writing this recommendation in support of Jodi Harpstead being confirmed as Commissioner of the Department of Human Services. Jodi has demonstrated commitment and expertise in improving the lived experience of all Minnesotans. I first met Jodi after organizing a group of churches who were praying for peace and an end to violence following the Philando Castile murder. Jodi joined the "Come Together" movement out of a deep concern for the welfare of People of Color because she is committed to removing racial barriers. We worked together across the Twin Cities bringing churches and communities together building relationships and working for peace.

After working together in Come Together, Jodi asked me to work with her and Lutheran Social Service to increase equity for People of Color in North Minneapolis (At that time Jodi was the LSS CEO; I previously organized with ISAIAH working for racial and economic justice for over a decade.) Jodi and LSS has accomplished much throughout its existence, but Jodi recognized that the organization she led at the time had not help improve the lives of communities of color like North Minneapolis in any meaningful way. Consequently, Jodi asked me to help build stronger relationships with partners in North Minneapolis and figure out how LSS can add services that provide pathways to equity and better lives.

Working with Jodi, I've understood that she makes those around her better. She believes in people and helps them channel their energy into better possibilities. Jodi inspires a hopefulness in the people she works with and optimism about opportunities. Part of that spirit in her I believe comes from a clarity of vision and an ability to create an environment where people feel affirmed and nurtured.

We've all been witness to the skilled and inspirational leadership Jodi has provided at DHS thus far. She faced the challenges of DHS head on and has restored trust back in the agency. And Jodi has also demonstrated a commitment to address systemic race and racism so that DHS can remove barriers to service and improve the quality of life for all Minnesotans.

Senator Wiklund, Jodi's resume' confirms her unique qualification to serve as Commissioner of Human Services. Minnesota needs a DHS Commissioner who has the skill and passion to remove barriers and create a path for all people to experience dignity and live their best lives. That kind of leadership requires a quality not often found, an ability to desire an environment where we can all thrive and ability to navigate toward the creation of that environment with courage and grace. If confirmed, she will continue to be a great Commissioner for the Department of Human Services, and a great advocate for a better more inclusive Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Rev. Paul Slack