



March 23, 2023

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the more than 10,000 members of the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), I am addressing four important items in SF2995, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) budget bill.

The MMA supports continued funding for studies into telehealth expansion and payment parity, and continued coverage for telehealth service. Telehealth, specifically audio-only telehealth, is important for many Minnesotans. It is critical for patients who do not have access to reliable internet or broadband connectivity, low-income patients who may not have access to video-only technology, or patients who are less comfortable using video-only services. The MMA supports continuing audio-only coverage past the current June 30, 2023, deadline and the MDH study is important to achieve continued coverage.

The MMA supports the funding for grants for new rural residency training programs. Minnesota has a great need for additional physicians and other healthcare providers to practice in rural and other underserved regions of our state. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, an additional 14,100 to 17,600 physicians are needed across the country to address the shortage in rural areas. By locating training in rural areas, we can expose more future physicians to rural practice, and help address the workforce shortage of these professionals in Minnesota.

The MMA also supports the efforts needed to ensure maximum federal funds for the Medical Education and Research Costs (MERC). To ensure the funding, it is needed to transfer the funding from MDH to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), as required under recent federal changes. This transfer of funding is not new funding, so should not be applied against the committee's target. MERC has been a critical funding source for our future physicians and other healthcare providers. Thank you for ensuring full funding.

While the MMA supports efforts to improve planning for healthcare spending, including supporting the Governor's recommendation to establish spending growth targets, we have concerns with the creation of a Healthcare Affordability Board that is politically appointed that has the authority to administer civil penalties of up to \$500,000 to healthcare entities. The MMA stands ready to participate in efforts to improve our healthcare planning, including establishing growth targets that we can all work to achieve. We ask that you do not include the regulatory and civil penalties included in SF 2002.



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While there are many other items in SF2995, I thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on these critical provisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Nicholson".

William Nicholson, MD  
President, Minnesota Medical Association