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March 29, 2023

Dear Chair Lieblich and Members of the Health Finance Committee:

As the new Bishop of the Diocese of St. Cloud, I wanted to send you greetings and to thank you for your support of the MinnesotaCare Immigrant Inclusion Act to be included in HF2930.

One of the great joys in my life was studying in Mexico City while a sophomore in college, as well as spending a year of study in Santiago, Chile. I have felt a strong connection with Latino families in the U.S. wherever I have lived and worked as a priest. I am also keenly aware of the trials and suffering of undocumented immigrants, especially when it comes to being excluded from accessing healthcare.

It has always been clear to me that our nation's economy depends heavily on the immigrant communities to serve in the agricultural sector, in meatpacking conglomerates, in the construction industry, and in the food service industry. They usually assume the kind of jobs that most Americans would never assume. Too often the kind of labor in which they engage takes a heavy toll on their physical health and safety. Though undocumented, all of them pay tax revenue to the state and federal government, yet they cannot access or afford needed healthcare.

In my short time here in Minnesota, I have learned that Minnesota's population and workforce is shrinking at twice the rate of the national average. Moreover, those Minnesotans without status are assuming jobs that an aging and more educated workforce is unable to fill. These good people are making an important contribution to the overall common good of the people of Minnesota.

My own formation in the seminary taught me that while nations have the right to control their borders, families who flee violence, persecution, or extreme poverty have the right to emigrate to seek a better future for their families. We are invited to see these men and women, with or without papers, as our brothers and sisters, whose stories would differ little from our own ancestors when they emigrated to the U.S. many years ago.

It would be a work of justice and fairness to assure that all Minnesota mixed status families are afforded access to the MN Care Buy In through the MinnesotaCare Immigrant Inclusion Act. I wish you every success and blessing in your efforts to move such legislation forward for the good of us all.

Sincerely,

*Most Rev. Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.*

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Bishop, Diocese of St. Cloud