



March 31, 2023

To: Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee
RE: SF2995 – Health and Human Services Omnibus

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's comments on SF2995 – the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill. LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees who serve one in 65 Minnesotans every year. We are committed to innovative, person-centered service delivery that promotes resilience and long-term stability for people in all stages of life.

Thank you for including provisions that will respond to community needs and improve access to service. This is a critical step to providing adequate and stable resources that ensure our neighbors are supported when, where and how they need it.

Mental Health Bridge Funding. Thank you for including a temporary rate increase through bridge funding. Providers are experiencing multiple challenges to meet the needs of Minnesotans accessing community-based mental health services. This investment will begin to address reimbursement rates that are far below the true cost of service and a severe shortage of well-qualified and licensed mental health providers.

Homeless Youth Act. Thank you for the increased investments in supporting youth statewide. Unfortunately, due to several factors, Minnesota youth who are homeless on their own has continued to increase, and the need is much greater than currently available resources. The additional funding will support providers to strengthen programs that have demonstrated success and merit further investment

Safe Harbor. Thank you for the additional investment in Safe Harbor programs which will increase prevention of sexual exploitation while helping more youth feel a sense of belonging and have opportunities to confront and cope with past traumas.

Kinship Caregiver Support. Thank you for the inclusion of investment in a Kinship Navigator program. This is critical to helping more families identify services and supports to meet the needs of the children they are raising as well as their own needs. This will enhance the safety and stability of these family arrangements and support prevention of the need for child welfare involvement.



Prepared Meals. Thank you for the inclusion of funding for prepared meals statewide to Minnesotans facing food insecurity and who lack the home, health, or ability to cook for themselves. Meals will reach our neighbors not eligible for other federally funded meal programs and tailored to the cultural and dietary needs of the people served.

Continuous Eligibility. Thank you for including provisions to provide continuous eligibility for children eligible for Medical Assistance. This will provide consistent access to health care and improve outcomes for children while reducing administrative burden and churn.

Screening for eligibility and public assistance. LSS Financial Counseling is a trusted, nonjudgmental resource with over 30 years of experience and consistently sees the impact of medical debt on our neighbors. These provisions will remove barriers for Minnesotans who qualify for public programs to receive assistance thereby reducing medical debt and increasing payment to medical providers.

LSS is thankful for your thoughtful leadership and support of neighbors helping neighbors. Please contact me at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information.

Sincerely,

Erin Sutton, MSW, LGSW
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Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota