

Dear Senator Hoffman and Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I will keep things short and succinct as I know how valuable and limited your time is.

I am writing today to express my growing concerns and frustrations regarding the many discriminatory regulations and practices that day program providers continue to face from the state and more specifically the Department of Human Services. Over the past few years, especially with the implementation of Waiver Reimagine, I have only noticed these discriminatory practices more clearly.

The system already sets small, standalone day programs up for failure. With inadequate funding and service rates, there is limited room for creative programming and innovation. Those of us that do manage to find success are constantly bombarded with barriers and forced to jump through unnecessary hoops to please the 'powers' that be... i.e., the Department of Human Services.

For black and minority owned programs, these barriers are tenfold. Over the years getting to know Fartun and her day program, I have seen her experience blatant racism. Fartun has been forced to redo a county Needs Determination despite already having an active license, and there being a well-documented and well-known dire need for day services across the state. She has been told by county representatives that her last licensing review was "extremely concerning" despite all correction orders being administrative in nature that would not affect the safety or wellbeing of her clients. Fartun puts her heart into caring for the state's most vulnerable. To be treated this way is disgusting.

In expressing these concerns, I do fear retaliation from DHS for my own organization. Therefore, I am signing this public letter anonymously. As white colleague and ally, I express full support in the foundation of the Minnesota Ethnic Providers Network. As a state, we need more organizations and groups of people willing to stand up against these systemically discriminatory practices.

Thank you for your time.