



March 19, 2023

Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Lynn Noren, and I am the President of Rise - an organization that provides employment and day support services to people with disabilities. I am also the Chair of the Government Affairs Committee of MOHR, a statewide association of over 100 nonprofit organizations providing employment and day support services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on the DHS Human Services Budget Bill, SF 2934.

Our state is in the midst of an incredibly challenging workforce shortage. While this workforce shortage is impacting all types of employers across the state, it is particularly destabilizing for Minnesotans with disabilities who are experiencing significant service access barriers due to the extreme shortage of available staff. Across the state, group homes are closing, vital support services for people living independently are going unrendered, and our employment and day support providers have growing waiting lists of Minnesotans with disabilities wishing to access employment and day services for whom providers cannot find staff.

To put it simply: If we as a state value Minnesotans with disabilities living engaged and connected lives, our state set reimbursement rates must be set at a level to pay for the staff supports necessary to make that possible. We appreciate the proposals brought forward by the Governor Walz Administration in SF 2934 to address much needed investments in the Disability Waiver Rate System. However, we believe these investments do not go far enough to address the current significant waiver-services access barriers faced by people with disabilities. The accelerated implementation dates for upcoming rate adjustments included in SF 2934 will help, but these adjustments will still be based on years-old data. The SF 2934 proposal to increase the Competitive Workforce Factor for "unit-based" waiver-funded services will also help, but limiting this proposal to only impact unit-based services leaves behind the many people with disabilities experiencing staff shortages in day support and residential services.

The current state surplus presents an opportunity for legislators to address multiple critical HHS needs, and we encourage this committee to support significant investments in the Disability Waiver Rate System to help more people with disabilities access the supports they need to live engaged and connected lives.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Noren', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lynn Noren | MOHR Government Affairs Committee, Chair | Rise, President | lnoren@rise.org