

Honorable Senator John F. Hoffman,

I am sending you a letter regarding SF 2934 and the Governor's proposal to move FRS (family Residential Services) homes from the current framework rate to a flat tiered rate as of 1/1/2026.

In making my voice heard and get my point across, I will be addressing you by the use of bullet points.

- Pandemic/working from home – Did you work from home at some point during the pandemic? If so, did the expectations of your duties change because you were working from home? Did your pay change? I'm guessing **NO** for either question. In fact, thousands of Minnesotan's worked from home and continue to work from home during the pandemic without changes to their job responsibilities or pay. In fact, working from home has become the new norm, pandemic or no pandemic. As a private foster care provider and licensed 245D provider, I work from home **BUT** I still have the exact same job and responsibilities as a corporate group home. There's absolutely **NO DIFFERENCE** to the licensing standards for my home as compared to a corporate home. The only difference is that I can not punch out and go home when my shift is over and I get to sleep in my own bed. I am ALWAYS available 24/7, 365 days a year. Just that alone should be enough evidence that family residential providers (FRS) deserve the same rates/pay as community residential providers (CRS). I find it insulting that after our countless hours of work over the past 2+ years during the pandemic, our careers are being targeted, **once again**, with the discussion of rate cuts as a result of the flat tiered rate proposal. Corporate homes also worked countless hours during the pandemic and had to increase their staffing in order to meet the needs of the individuals they serve with the only difference being that staff in corporate homes get to punch out and go home. Again, pandemic or not, as a private provider, I am always available 24/7, 365 days a year in order to meet the **same** licensing requirements as corporate homes. Most of us private family residential providers worked around the clock during the pandemic and we did not have to deal with being short staffed because we are the staff! Community residential service/corporate homes were in a staffing crisis during the pandemic and they continue to be dealing with a staffing crisis. As you know many corporate homes had to close their doors due to staffing issues. I have not heard of any FRS homes closing their doors during the pandemic because we are available and expected to work 24/7.
- Corporate home versus private homes – **Both** community residential settings (CRS) and family residential settings (FRS) have to be **licensed** by **Rule 203** (adult foster care) and **both** have to be **licensed** by **245D** in order to provide **waiver services**. Again, **NO DIFFERENCE!** I am responsible for the exact same standards and duties as a corporate home provides. The only difference is that I live at my place of employment. I am the CEO, the Designated Manager, the awake staff, the sleep staff, the the cook, the maintenance staff, the grounds keeper, the office manager, etc. I am **EVERYTHING** and

provide every service that is done by several different people at corporate homes. Seven years ago, an individual was placed in my home after being in corporate homes for approximately 60 years. This individual's needs assessment did not change once he moved into my home. The **ONLY** thing that changed was his **ADDRESS!** However, the rate he was getting at his corporate home did not follow him. Instead, I was given a lower rate to provide the **EXACT SAME SERVICE**. How is this justified? How will the flat tiered rates be justified? It's unacceptable!

- Client Rights - Clients and their guardians have the right to choose what services they want and who will provide them such services. The client is assessed for their needs and their needs don't change based on the provider they choose. Example: Their need for medication administration, medical support, awake staff, sleep staff, dietary concerns, medical equipment, programming, etc. doesn't change just because they choose to reside in a privately run home versus a corporate home.
- My choice and my career – I am college educated and a licensed social worker and licensed case manager. Over the past 35 years, I have worked in corporate group homes, worked as a county social worker, worked as a hospital social worker, worked in quality improvement at a reputable hospital and as a provider/community relations liaison for said hospital. Additionally, I provide foster care and waiver services in my home. Four years ago, I gave up my career at the reputable hospital to focus solely on my family foster care business. Gaul Family Adult Foster Care is my business and I'm very proud of what I do. I work tirelessly, along with my supplemental staff and volunteers to provide an exceptional service to those that choose to obtain services from me. I am vetted by parents, guardians and county social workers before an individual is placed in my home. I am not **JUST** a **FOSTER HOME!** I am a licensed **245D provider**. I don't take the "easy" clients that so many falsely think us private providers serve. My 3 clients each have high medical, physical and behavioral support needs. I would be unable to obtain my two different state licenses if I didn't follow the same standards and procedures as corporate homes. Being a private provider is not for the faint of heart and it takes great dedication, knowledge and training to do what I do. I have staff and volunteers who need the **same** background study and **same** training as a staff or volunteer in a corporate home. Again, no difference, as I have to uphold the same standards as a corporate home. And, let's not forget that I am unable to apply for a license to open a corporate home due to the **state moratorium**. Therefore, I am forced to be a private provider. Don't get me wrong, this is my calling and what I love to do and I go above and beyond for my consumers to live their best life.
- Flat tiered rate – As private providers, we generally do not have a voice or representation. We have not been asked to sit on any committees. We are **misunderstood** in what services we provide. If we need support regarding rate calculation tools, we get different answers from different social workers within the same county and each county has their own idea of how to set an individual rate. Because of this, those that set the rules and regulations at the state level seem to think

that private providers are uneducated regarding the rules and are viewed as foster parents only, even though we also hold a 245D license. The **BIG DOG** gets what they want, meaning the large corporate homes. They are able to get higher rates based on what? There needs to be a standardization of rates across the board based on the needs of the consumer. **NEEDS OF THE CLIENT** and **CLIENT CHOICE** is the focus here!

- Repetition – yes, I repeated myself numerous times throughout this letter in order to get my point across and my voice heard for all my fellow private, family providers. We are licensed Rule 203 foster care providers **AND** 245D providers **JUST LIKE REM**, Dungarvin, Mains’l and other corporate providers. **SAME LICENSE, SAME SERVICE!**
- Open door policy – my door is open to come and tour my home and learn about the services I provide. I challenge you to find a difference in the services provided by a corporate home. The only difference you will find is that those that I serve will have consistency in staff and routines, will go on vacation with me, will attend family gatherings with me, will not just be considered a “client” but rather a family member and they will have opportunities that they might not have if they lived in a corporate home. That being said, corporate homes do great things as well and many consumers thrive in corporate settings with shift staff. It’s not a matter of us/private versus them/corporate. It’s a matter of “We”. “We” as private and corporate entities provide the exact same service and deserve to be compensated equally. Year after year, “We” have to fight for our rates/pay. There’s not many careers where one has to worry about the possibility of their pay going down repeatedly. These fluctuating rate changes directly affect the individual needing services. I find this very **alarming!** Moving FRS to a flat tiered rate is unacceptable. The flat rate is not sustainable for my home to then continue to function, as I would be cut 40 to 51% of my annual revenue. I beg of you to not let this happen to FRS homes. We serve a great need just like CRS do. Please keep us under the same rate system as the CRS homes.

Thank you, on behalf of myself and my fellow private providers for your time. And, please don’t hesitate to contact me with further questions or if you would like to come and tour my home and meet my AMAZING housemates, staff and volunteers.

Respectfully,  
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