



*Protecting, Maintaining and Improving the Health of All
Minnesotans*

April 29, 2024

The Honorable John Marty
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3235 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty, Senator Wiklund, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to you today to express my appreciation for hearing the Administration's public health priorities in the Senate's Health Omnibus bill (SF4699). I also appreciate the hard work that you, your committees, and your staff have put in this session. I greatly appreciate your efforts and want to highlight MDH priorities included in this bill.

The Department of Health remains grateful for everything included in last year's budget, and this year the Governor's supplemental budget requests are centered around adding clarity to our work for the Minnesotans we serve. We wanted to highlight a few of the MDH proposals included in the bill.

988 Telecom Fee

Added in 2023, MDH is requesting to establish the 988 fee at 12 cents to provide certainty to consumers and providers, and to ensure MDH has adequate funding to provide essential services. As you know, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential phone, text, and chat support for any person who may be experiencing a suicide, mental health, substance use crisis or other emotional distress. It provides lifesaving support to Minnesotans 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year via call, text, and online chat.

Background Studies Reduction

MDH is seeking a reduction to our SGSR appropriation, as licensees regulated by MDH are now responsible for paying fees associated with the preparation of fingerprints, criminal records check consent form, and the criminal background check to the Department of Human Services.

Loan Forgiveness Account Creation

MDH is seeking to establish a dedicated loan forgiveness SGSR account for health professionals. Currently, funds remaining after each biennium are canceled, meaning any awards that are returned may not be re-awarded. This account will allow those funds to be reinvested and more awards granted. In 2023, over 350 eligible health professionals applied for slightly more than 150 awards.

Clinician Training Expansion Grant Program

Updates to a three-year grant period allowing more flexible spending for grantees due to the different funding needs during the years of their training.

International Medical Graduate (IMG) Program Expansion

This program supports trained physicians as they prepare to get licensed to practice in Minnesota and to enter the U.S. medical system once their permanent status has been determined. It would expand the program to allow international medical graduates, who are granted temporary immigrant status, such as those from Afghanistan and Ukraine, to seek guidance and support for preparing to use their medical background to serve communities in Minnesota and build a career in Minnesota as a licensed health care provider.

Assisted Living and Home Care Licensure Updates

In 2019 the legislature established assisted living licensure laws to set consistent, clear expectations for providers and create more protections for people living in assisted living establishments. Since implementation on August 1, 2021, MDH has continued to engage in a robust stakeholder conversation on how to best operationalize these licensing laws. Through this process, we've identified new needs that require further clarification in statute.

Supplemental Nursing Services Updates

Clarifies qualifications, training, and requirements of Supplemental Nursing Services Agencies to ensure a high quality of care for children, families, and other vulnerable individuals requiring these services.

Thank you to Chair Marty and the Finance Committee for hearing this bill and the support you and your committee have provided the agency over the last few years. We look forward to working with you over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brooke A. G." followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Brooke Cunningham, MD, PhD
Commissioner of Health