



April 4, 2024

Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate
1100 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

Legal Aid is writing in strong support of SF3969 that requires the Commissioner of Human Services to apply for a federal waiver to provide nutrition supports as a covered service under medical assistance.

This bill is relevant to Legal Aid's extreme concern for the more than 6,000 Minnesotans who lost SNAP benefits under federal time limits in January and February. Our attorneys and advocates were aware of the challenges surrounding an accurate and efficient post-COVID implementation of time limits. However, our experiences on the front lines of fighting hunger are that most individuals coded as "time-limited recipients" are either coded improperly or have been unsuccessful in communicating their relevant health barriers to the county for timely action.

The deep poverty facing these Minnesotans is made immensely more difficult by challenges arising from homelessness, addiction, a lack of mental health care, chronic and complex health needs, undiagnosed learning disabilities, post-traumatic contacts with the carceral system, a lack of access to transportation, and barriers to accessing adult basic education and training.

Legal Aid and the broader anti-hunger community view food as a human right and integral to health and well-being: food as medicine. A federal waiver that allows Minnesota to more flexibly assess food insecurity as part of overall health care would be welcome for this population.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Jessica Webster
Staff Attorney
Legal Aid