



April 17, 2024

Sen. Melissa Wiklund
Room 2107, Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave W
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF 4699 Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of various provisions included in your health and human services omnibus budget bill that ensure health system sustainability, address current workforce shortage challenges, and invest in health equity. Hennepin Healthcare System is Minnesota's largest Medicaid provider system and safety-net level I trauma hospital with primary care clinics across Hennepin County.

We are also facing the same workforce shortage challenges impacting several industries. The following bills will help us address those shortages and support health care professionals by:

- Drawing down federal funds and establishing supplemental payments to eligible hospitals for **graduate medical education** costs (SF 4946).
- Establishing **programs for physician wellness and health care professional well-being** SF 3531.

Thank you for also including **mental health services payment rate increases** (SF 5084). Low reimbursement rates are creating barriers to accessing critical mental health care services. Investing in mental health to provide appropriate care, early intervention, and prevention services will help Minnesotans heal and prevent crises. Additionally, we appreciate the inclusion of SF 2320 **limiting the use of prior authorization or step therapy for drugs to prevent human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)**. This will have a positive impact on our Positive Care Center which provides quality, comprehensive health and psychosocial services to those living with HIV.

We believe equity is essential for optimal health outcomes. We strongly believe the following bills support health equity efforts and urge you to include them in your omnibus bill:

- Health coverage of **gender-affirming care** for Minnesotans (SF 2209).
- Requiring the commissioner of human services to apply for a section **1115 demonstration waiver for Health-Related Social Needs**. This would allow Minnesota to provide medically appropriate nutritional and housing support as covered services under Medical Assistance (MA) (SF 3969).
- Establishing the **SNAP as medicine program** to address the unmet needs of Minnesotans at significant risk of hunger and other social determinants of health and acknowledging access to healthy food improves health outcomes. (SF 3968).

As the Omnibus process continues, we hope you will also reconsider the following proposals for inclusion:

- **SF 4462 which modifies hospital payment rates** and ensures reimbursement for the cost of care we provide. Health systems across the state are facing significant financial challenges. Sustainability of the wide breadth of services we provide for families and patients is vital.
- Removing prohibitions on **specialty dentists** who hold a general dental license from practicing in another area of dentistry outside the dentist's specialty area (**SF 3500**).
- Amending licensing requirements for **graduates of foreign medical schools** (SF 3611).
- **Establishing certified midwife licensure** by the Board of Nursing (SF 1743).

I respectfully ask for your support of these legislative proposals that will make a difference for patients across the State of Minnesota. Thank you for your continued partnership to create and healthy and bright future for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer DeCubellis".

Jennifer DeCubellis
Chief Executive Officer
Hennepin Healthcare System

Contact: Susie Emmert 651-278-5422 susie.emmert@hcmcd.org