



Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
April 18, 2024

Chair Wiklund and Health and Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN) and the MN Coalition of Licensed Social Workers (Coalition), we are writing in support of several components in SF4699, the Health and Human Services omnibus bill.

NASW-MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state and the Coalition includes the MN Association of Black Social Workers, the MN Hmong Social Workers' Coalition, the MN Nursing Home Social Workers Association, the MN School Social Workers Association, and the MN Society for Clinical Social Work. Collectively we represent over 3,000 social workers.

Mental Health

Thank you for including an increase in mental health provider rates in your budget proposal. There is a significant gap between the cost of delivering services and reimbursement rates. Addressing this gap will improve access to services, increase capacity in mental health settings, and reduce staffing shortages.

Additionally, expanding the child and family psychoeducation MA services to mental health practitioners is a practical way to address funding gaps in mental health settings. These are services that are often already being provided, but with no payment. Furthermore, it has the added benefit of extending to school settings. With payment, social workers can better utilize this preventative strategy.

Social work is based on a mission to enhance the well-being of humans. We advocate for our clients, and want to ensure that social workers and other professionals are supported in their work.

Child Protection

We support the inclusion of components of the African American Family Preservation Act. This aligns with NASW-MN's priorities to support every child growing up in a nurturing and safe environment. We recognize the disproportionate presence of African American children and families in the child protection system, and the long-term harm it causes when we focus on separation and punishment. Instead, we advocate for trauma-responsive policies that foster participation, restoration, safety, and resilience.

As you consider the Child Protection Advisory Council, we respectfully ask you to consider adding the voice of a social worker with experience in the child protection system. We believe that transforming current practices is necessary to prevent harm within families and recurrent trauma in foster care. We hope a Child Protection Advisory Council can address this complex

system while holding and honoring multiple truths: our system provides an important safety net for vulnerable families in need of support while operating without sufficient resources; and yet, it disproportionately impacts families who do not identify as white while introducing unnecessary trauma into the lives of MN children. We believe social workers are an important voice to include when talking about improving the child protection system.

We appreciate that resources are limited and the needs are great. Thank you for your work in balancing competing needs.

Sincerely,

Coalition of Licensed Social Workers Representatives,

Karen Goodenough, PhD, LGSW, National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter

Renita Wilson, MSW, LICSW, MN Association of Black Social Workers

Kao Nou Moua, PhD, MSW, LGSW, MN Hmong Social Workers' Coalition,

Joanna Genovese-Cairns, MSW, LISW, MN Nursing Home Social Workers Association

Julie Campanelli, LICSW, Ed.S, MN School Social Workers Association

James Stoltz, LICSW, LADC, MN Society for Clinical Social Work

Jenny Arneson, MSW, LGSW, Legislative Consultant