



April 17, 2024

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

First and foremost, thank you. Thank you for your compassion, consideration, and unwavering commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities and those of us who have the privilege of assisting them to live their lives where and how they choose. The discussions within this committee, led by its passionate members, have been impactful and dynamic. I personally want to express my sincere gratitude for allowing me to be a part of what will be the most consequential legislative work completed in St. Paul this session.

You have crafted SF 5335 in such a way that it will positively impact the lives of individuals served by Accessible Space, Inc. (ASI), as well as the way our team is able to complete this meaningful work. While some components will have a direct and significant impact on how we support these individuals, others are just as important and noteworthy for our fellow service providers and the people they serve. So, thank you!

We sincerely appreciate this year's efforts to refine the Integrated Community Supports (ICS) framework, particularly the ongoing exploration of including nursing services. While we understand the current budgetary constraints, we are ready to collaborate with you and the Department of Human Services during the next session to make this change possible.

Moreover, we are incredibly grateful for the one-time appropriation and offset for nursing services within our ICS settings. This serves as a significant bridge and demonstrates a commitment to ongoing discussion in 2025. We will diligently gather data on the impact of these supports for individuals in ICS settings with nursing care. This will further strengthen the justification for permanent reforms to the ICS rate framework.

Another key provision in Article 1, Section 25 allows for direct care support in hospitals during short stays. This offers significant benefits for people with disabilities, including:

- Shorter and more successful hospital stays.
- Reduced patient anxiety and stress.
- Improved care transitions through direct care knowledge transfer between hospital staff and caregivers.

This provision advances person-centered care by ensuring continued support for individuals with disabilities throughout their healthcare journey.

We also strongly support the inclusion of language in Article 1, Section 15. This allows providers to use funds designated for direct care support to cover assistive technology for people with disabilities in the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS). This new legislation removes barriers and encourages the use of assistive technology, which we wholeheartedly endorse and plan to expand across our settings throughout Minnesota.

And finally, we want to briefly express our support for the following provisions:

- Article 1, Sections 4 and 5: proposal to allow Out-of-Home Respite for children to be provided in an unlicensed setting.
- Article 1, Section 22: the creation of a Family Residential Services Taskforce.
- Article 1, Section 29: funding for the Own Home services provider capacity-building grants.
- **The amendment to include one-time funding for the planning grant to expand the statewide Juniper Community Care Hub model**

Thank you, Chair Hoffman, committee members, David Zak, Cassie Sohr, Liam Monahan, and Kyle Raymond, for your tireless dedication and expertise throughout this session. Your commitment to improving lives is evident in the important work you do in St. Paul. We're honored to partner with you on this journey and pledge our continued support as we work towards the end of the session.

Sincerely,

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