

April 17, 2024

Dear Chair Hoffman and Members of the Senate Human Services Finance and Policy Committee:

Thank you for your all efforts this session to improve the lives of people with disabilities, older adults, people living with substance use disorders, and all Minnesotans who need the support of our state's human services system.

I am very pleased to see that your proposed supplemental budget bill (SF 5335) builds on the historic and generational investments in Minnesota's human services system, and even though we are in a non-budget session, takes important and critical steps forward that will improve people's lives.

I am especially grateful for the inclusion of several of the governor's key supplemental budget priorities, including:

- **Addressing urgent needs for psychiatric treatment beds within Direct Care and Treatment.** As this committee knows well, demand for admission to DHS-operated mental health facilities for adults, children and adolescents has risen dramatically. Building capacity systemwide will require significant investment over a period of years, but the steps in your bill to add treatment capacity where it's most needed will improve admissions over the next six to 12 months.
- Investments and reforms to improve how we address **acute care transitions** and respond to the crisis of people boarding in hospitals and emergency departments.
- Funding at close to the level of the Governor's recommendation for the **Human Services Contingency Account** so that the Department is well positioned to respond to unexpected and urgent issues that arise.
- Additional funding to build on the success of **Bridging Benefits** to support people successfully re-enter the community following prison.

I also greatly appreciate the inclusion of key recommendations from the **Priority Admissions Task Force**.

As we move toward conference committee, we hope you will support the **Medicaid 1115 "Re-Entry" demonstration project** proposed in the Governor's budget. This will allow Medicaid to cover physical and behavioral health services in prisons and jails in the 90 days before a person reenters the community. This transformative strategy will save lives, support Minnesotans to reenter the community successfully after incarceration, and promote public safety, racial justice and equitable behavioral health outcomes.

I would also ask that you consider the Governor's proposal to **remove the sunset on opioid manufacturer fees** to support Minnesota's response to the ongoing and worsening opioid crisis. Unfortunately, the need for resources to heal from this epidemic will continue for years to come.

Thank you again for all your work and I look forward to further discussion as we get closer to the end of session.

Sincerely,



Jodi Harpstead  
Commissioner