

April 16, 2024

Re: SF 5335

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments on SF5335. The Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) is made up of over 4,000 health and human service (HHS) professionals statewide. Our members cover the health and human service spectrum—mental health providers, social workers, case managers, etc.—and are employed by for-profit and nonprofit entities, as well as state and local government agencies.

We seek your support to build a stronger HHS workforce in Minnesota. Among the many issues we're supporting this session, from investments in our workforce, direct care and treatment, the mental health system, substance use and disorder services, housing and shelter, home and community-based services and more, we ask that you include the following provisions in final negotiations including:

Transitional Moving Services

We are thankful that you've included measures in SF2968 which would provide much-needed investments in the Transitional Moving Services program and help those on home and community-based waivers get the support they need to move into the community. This is a program that helps those 18 and older enrolled on the Brain Injury (BI), Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI), Community Alternative Care (CAC), or Developmental Disabilities (DD) waiver to move into their own home or an unfurnished integrated community supports setting. It helps pay for essential moving services and household items, like movers, a security deposit, basic furniture and curtains, as well as the costs for providers who help connect and manage these services. Transitional Moving Services has seen no investment since its inception in 2005. The cost of living including security deposits, movers, and furniture has increased significantly since 2005. \$3,000 is no longer enough to cover these expenses. While we're grateful for the increase outlined to \$4,000, a full increase to \$7,000 is needed to account for these increase costs and ensure that those who need this serve are able to get it. We ask that you please include SF2968 in your final proposal.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

We're thankful for the investments made last session in the state's federally-mandated NEMT program. However, rates are still unsustainable, and more investment is desperately needed to stabilize this vital program for many Minnesotans. Stagnant NEMT reimbursement rates have caused many providers to no longer provide this service due to increased fuel, mileage, and insurance costs. Many MSSA members have felt the impact of this crisis and while they are grateful the rates were increased by 11% last year, they have told us they have not yet felt the impact and that more will be needed to address the ongoing crisis. The provisions included in SF316 to fully raise MA reimbursement rates where they need to be for this service will help mitigate this crisis and ensure that providers are able to continue this essential service; we ask that you include this in your final proposal.

Access to Assistive Technology

We are thankful that you have included measures in SF4268 which would allow for assistive technology partnerships. This proposal will be incredibly meaningful for those receiving waiver services by expanding access to assistive clinical technology systems in their own homes. These systems have been shown to significantly increase medication adherence, reduce missed appointments, and reduce

admission to emergency departments, and will be incredibly beneficial to those for whom it is difficult or sometimes impossible to leave their home. We ask that you include SF4268 in your final proposal.

Arts-Based Employment

We are thankful that you have included measures from SF5357 which would provide a one-time appropriation for the Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. Interact operates as a Home and Community-Based Service provider under MN DHS license 245D. Their mission to “create art that challenges perceptions of disability,” supports people with disabilities in creating professional-level artistic work in both visual and performing arts. They sustain a high level of community integration through public performances and arts exhibitions, and pay all artists with disabilities at rates commensurate with other local and regional small arts organizations. This investment would allow them to regenerate pre-COVID level of operations, serve more people in greater Minnesota, expand opportunities for those with disabilities to participate in visual and performing arts, increase disability equity and inclusion support and engagement, provide inclusive programming during evenings and weekends, and help develop a sustainable cost model. We ask that you include SF5357 in your final budget proposal.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to share our support for the measures you’ve included in SF5335 on behalf of our members and the clients they serve. Please reach out to us with questions, comments, or concerns at msancartier@mnssa.org.

Sincerely,

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