



April 24, 2025

To: Senator Marty, Committee Chair & Senator Pratt, Minority Lead  
CC: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

Re: Senate Human Services Omnibus Bill

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The Minnesota Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities is a statewide organization of self-advocates, providers, and disability advocacy organizations working to improve the lives of Minnesotans with Disabilities.

Tens of thousands of Minnesotans with disabilities rely on long term care Medical Assistance (MA) services to thrive in community. We are alarmed at both the federal uncertainty around Medicaid funding to states and the target this committee received.

We know there will be tough choices to make, but it's critical to express both our support for the positive aspects of this bill and our concerns regarding several components of this bill.

### **Self-Attestation for Continuation of Services**

We are pleased to see Senator Abeler's common sense provisions starting at line 59.26 that save time and reduce stress for persons with permanent disabilities. The assessment process is long and cumbersome, and while it's important to get accurate information about a person's condition, many Minnesotans with lifelong disabilities don't experience much significant change to the condition year after year. It's important that the law recognize this and make it easier for them to remain qualified and able to receive services.

### **Due Process Protections for CADI and BI Waiver Recipients**

Tens of thousands of Minnesotans with physical and mental health disabilities rely on CADI and BI waivers to pay for basic support services they need to remain independent and live in their community. This bill will cut some Minnesotans who qualify for these programs solely on their risk of homelessness (Line 61.3). While we applaud the effort to keep any changes to eligibility very narrow – these Minnesotans deserve due process protections. Therefore - it is critical to keep in the strong due process protections for those being terminated from these programs. That includes 90 day appeal rights and immediate reassessments to check if they qualify for other programs (61.6-61.21).

## **Moving Back to County Cost Sharing may Lead to Service Rationing**

For many years in disability waiver funding, the state relied on county budgets to help curb waiver cost growth, and the result was insufficient and uneven services throughout the state. That's in part because when counties handle the budgets, they are incentivized to underspend, develop waitlists, and avoid overpayments resulting in county expenditures. As a result, people might struggle to get the services they need in a timely manner, leading to more frustration and difficulties for those who depend on these essential supports.

The current centralized system helps ensure fairness and equity for Minnesotans no matter where they live. Going back to these incentives are tempting in times of tight budgets, but could have the effect of exacerbating regional, geographic, and racial disparities. As counties grapple with differing budgetary constraints, there may be a tendency to limit access to residential services, which undermines the goal of developing innovative, need-based service plans, and can ultimately lead to more care in higher cost settings. It could also ultimately lead to individuals in less wealthy counties receiving substandard care or being placed in unsuitable environments.

If the 2% county share is enacted we recommend additional language and protections to ensure some geographic stability statewide. For instance, counties would not be able to create any across the board policies related to waiver services to save money. Furthermore, DHS should have the authority to examine and compare year of year waiver data of each county to make sure no significant changes occur because of this proposal.

## **Inflationary Cap of 2% is too rigid**

We applaud the Senate's rejection of the 2% inflation cap and are intrigued by the use of CPI to help produce cost savings in the tails. We believe the public would benefit from more transparency around exactly how this shift and change of calculating inflation will ensure less spending overall.

## **Investment in Wages is a Proven Method for Ensuring Well-Being of Persons with Disabilities**

Despite many of the cuts this bill has to make, we applaud the funding of some direct care workers in this bill. While not all direct care workers will benefit from these changes, it is critical to invest to keep investing in the workforce in the face of cuts to other parts of our system.

## **Swimming Lessons for Persons with Disabilities**

We also applaud the inclusion of Senator Mohamed's bill to allow recipients of CDCS to pay for swimming lessons. This simple change to law will have a profound impact for people with disabilities, especially children with autism who are at higher risk of drowning than their peers.

Finally – we must point out that absent from the governor's budget and this bill are more incentives for persons to utilize Consumer Directed Community Supports. This program has

consistently proven to help keep people in the community in the most person centered and integrated way possible, while also being, in aggregate, a cheaper alternative to traditional waiver budgets. We also suggest DHS do more to help ensure money allocated in waivers goes as much to the direct support workers who people with disabilities rely on. With wages still averaging only \$16.50 - \$18.50, we must do everything we can to make sure the resources keep this professionals in the field.

## **Conclusion**

As a whole, we believe this bill achieves the difficult goal of creating some cuts while avoiding most of the more rigid and inflexible cuts proposed in the governors budget. We fully support ensuring that billed services are actually being provided, and as people who advocate daily for adequate supports for ourselves and our communities, we also understand that our reimbursement systems and waivers are imperfect attempts to compensate for underlying deficiencies in funding and infrastructure. With the existing staffing and housing shortfalls, no reductions to waivers are without consequences for people and we urge you to consider the need to maintain adequate resources to meet people's needs.

Jason Bergquist

MN-CCD, Board co-chair