



March 12, 2025

Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Open Arms of Minnesota urging your support of SF1385 (Dibble) a bill that appropriates \$9 million **for grants to community-based HIV/AIDS support services providers**. Open Arms is a 501c3 non-profit that has been providing essential support services to individuals living with HIV/AIDS since 1986. We provide medically tailored meals and nutrition wrap around services for critically ill individuals, 80% of whom are also food insecure.

For nearly four decades, our organization has witnessed firsthand the critical role that proper nutrition plays in the health outcomes of individuals living with HIV/AIDS. These individuals cannot simply access traditional food shelves due to complex co-morbidities (multiple illnesses) that require highly customized and restricted diets, and comprehensive nutrition wrap-around supports.

The funding proposed in this bill will enable organizations like ours to:

- Provide medically tailored meals that meet the specific dietary requirements of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and related co-morbidities.
- Offer professional nutrition education and guidance to help clients manage their complex health conditions.
- Reach vulnerable populations who might otherwise fall through the cracks of our healthcare system.

For individuals living with HIV/AIDS, access to proper nutrition is not merely a convenience but a medical necessity helping their medicines work most effectively and decreasing their risk of malnutrition. Without these specialized nutrition services, **240 of our clients will be without medically tailored meals and nutrition counseling** and

face significantly worse health outcomes, increased hospitalization, and diminished quality of life.

We appreciate your consideration of this important legislation and stand ready to provide any additional information that will be helpful in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Leah Hebert Welles
CEO
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