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AFSCME Supports County-Administered Rural Medical Assistance (CARMA)

Dear Co-Chair Backer, Co-Chair Bierman, and Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee,

As an AFSCME employee working for Itasca Medical Care (IMCare), I write today in strong support of **HF2955 – County-Administered Rural Medical Assistance (CARMA)**.

I work closely with, and proudly represent approximately twenty dedicated AFSCME members at IMCare who serve over 7,000 members. These public servants consistently take on more responsibilities with fewer resources—and in my opinion they do it better than any Managed Care Organization in the state. Why? Because they *live* in the communities they serve. They work here. They shop here. They play here. They raise families here. They care deeply about the community and the people they serve.

To exemplify that care, I've had the privilege of working closely with our dental providers over the years and have consistently seen them go above and beyond for our members. When my father-in-law passed away, I came home to find one of those providers plowing my driveway. Not long after, I stood behind that same provider in the grocery store and watched them buy groceries for the local shelter. That's the kind of compassion and deep community connection that defines rural healthcare. Yes, rural health is complex and full of challenges—but what will drive CARMA's success are the people behind it and their passion for caring for their neighbors.

I've participated in contentious contract negotiations and tough rate-setting discussions with DHS. I want to commend DHS for their leadership and collaboration in bringing the CARMA legislation forward. This bill is more than just a policy proposal—it is a bridge between DHS and Minnesota counties, and it reflects a critical shift toward truly partnering with local communities to deliver public health programs. County-based solutions aren't just practical; they're essential.

I believe CARMA represents the future of healthcare delivery. It's a model that can demonstrate—on a national stage—how rural areas can provide high-quality, affordable care because of the local knowledge and deep community ties. And it will succeed because of the work, heart, and dedication of AFSCME Local 580 members at IMCare and beyond.

We are ready. The AFSCME members at Itasca Medical Care are eager to lead the way in transforming rural healthcare under HF2955. Please vote “yes” on CARMA and help us build a healthier, stronger future for Greater Minnesota.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Matt Alstad
Itasca Medical Care
Controller/CFO
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