



April 9, 2025

Dear Chair Wicklund and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's comments on SF2669 – the Health and Human Services omnibus budget bill. LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees who serve one in 63 Minnesotans every year.

We appreciate and understand the difficult decisions your committee must make to ensure a balanced state budget. **Thank you for inclusion of Medicaid Assistance provider rate increases for mental health services.** As a statewide community-based provider, we know all too well that maintaining access to mental health care for our neighbors requires critical investment in community-based mental health services. In 2024, LSS' Behavioral Health team supported 2,668 individuals in 76 counties through 19,320 in-person therapy visits, 7,043 telehealth visits, and 65 employer, school, and shelter-linked mental health partnerships.

Providers -- including LSS -- are experiencing multiple challenges to meet the mental health needs of Minnesotans. This includes operating for several years with reimbursement rates far below the true cost of service and a severe shortage of mental health providers. Demand for mental health services is also high and the needs of clients are highly complex. In 2025, we are facing the additional challenge of critical access rate reductions which is creating additional pressure while already operating within an unsustainable reimbursement model.

To ensure that we can continue providing services to individuals and families who need it most, we respectfully urge your continued support of this provision. Please contact me at erin.sutton@lssmn.org, if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

Erin Sutton
Senior Director of Advocacy
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota