

April 8, 2025

Re: SF 2699

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments on SF2699. 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 for our members and the clients they serve. Among the many issues we're supporting this session, we are excited to see your investments in the workforce, child welfare, mental health, housing and shelter, and more. In particular, we ask that you include the following provisions in final negotiations:

Northstar Care for Children

MSSA strongly supports efforts to ensure equitable financial support for children in foster care and adoption, regardless of age. The current disparity in Northstar benefit levels between children under six and those six and older creates unnecessary barriers for families and caregivers, and undermines stability for our youngest children. SF 1548 would align benefit levels to better reflect the true costs of care and promote permanency and well-being from the earliest years. We ask that you include this provision in your final budget proposal to support consistency and fairness for Minnesota's foster and adoptive families.

Social Services Information System (SSIS) Investments

MSSA is grateful you have included measures to invest in SSIS systems. MSSA membership includes 48 County agency members across Minnesota. Improving the capabilities and usability of SSIS, a system that has fallen out of sync with evolving service practices, will make a big difference for our members and the clients they serve in child welfare, adult and child mental health, and home and community based services. We ask that you please take the County position on the inclusion of this provision in your final budget proposal.

Suicide Prevention Curriculum for Native Youth

MSSA strongly supports SF 42, which provides funding to the Division of Indian Work to develop and pilot culturally specific suicide prevention curriculum for Native American youth. Native communities experience disproportionately high rates of youth suicide, and prevention efforts must be grounded in cultural identity, community wisdom, and youth engagement. This investment will support healing and resilience for Native youth across Minnesota. We urge you to include this provision 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 SF4699 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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