



February 6, 2025

To: Members of the Senate Human Services Committee
RE: SF402 (Seeberger)

Dear Chair Hoffman, Chair Rasmusson, and Members of the Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's support of SF402**. It is critical to refine the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) by implementing regular adjustments to the Competitive Workforce Factor (CWF). This is an important, long-term solution to reduce the wage gap between direct support professionals (DSPs) and comparable occupations.

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. This includes home and community-based services that are innovative and person-centered for people with disabilities. LSS' wide array of services are designed to meet the unique needs of individuals in a variety of settings including: In Home Supports, Employment First Services, Community Residential Services (CRS), CRS Tech Homes, and Specialized Community Supports. DSPs are the backbone of these services. Their work promotes informed decision-making, understanding risk, and exercising the rights and choices of people. Providing direct support is highly complex and requires significant skills, including sound judgment, independent problem-solving, decision-making, behavioral assessment, and crisis prevention and intervention.

We are thankful for past investments in the DWRS as well as the implementation of the CWF; however, reimbursement rates continue to perpetuate a significant wage gap for DSPs when compared to similar occupations. This has limited the ability of community providers to sustain competitive wages and benefits that reflect the professionalism and importance of the services provided. Further, a workforce shortage coupled with a high demand for caregiving professionals has exacerbated staffing shortages and turnover, with the potential to negatively impact the health, safety, and well-being of the people we support.

Please support SF402 to make investments in the DSP workforce and strengthen services for people with disabilities. This is critical to providing adequate and stable resources that ensure our neighbors are supported when, where and how they need it. Thank you, again, for this opportunity. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Thueson", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Patrick Thueson
President, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota