

Minnesota Senate
Human Services Committee
February 19, 2025
Chair – Sen. Hoffman

Re: Governor's human services budget and policy proposals – not impressed

Dear Mr. Chair and Members, many thanks for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate your time. My name is Idil Abdull, I am a Somali Autism Mom & trying to retire advocate.

Let me start by telling you that I am disappointed by the governor's policy and budget proposals for autism. It seems that Governor Walz and the state Medicaid agency (DHS) have failed again the autism community. Here is why and how:

1. We as autism families are being told to wait for years to put oversight and safety measures to protect children with autism. Why so long?
2. DHS is a regulatory agency and has the power to do something now. They can train both autism families and agencies on EIDBI policies. In fact, we advocated for DHS to hire autism staff back with republican governor Pawlenty's administration, Dr. Sulik and one person was hired. Now there are three clinical lead, policy lead and a trainer. Except, a Saudi woman has seen more daylight and the sun than them. They never come out and do actual in-person training or even online for anyone. If they are not doing what they were hired for but are still getting paid with public funds, then the governor should have proposed cutting their positions.
3. DHS can create a check list for families and agencies to follow instead of complaining silly things like some agencies do not have professional emails or do not understand EIDBI statute. Well – then DHS train people and stop blaming them for your failures.
4. We have already advocated for background checks a few years ago with Abeler and Liebling, and there is actually good, training required for agencies and staff, but DHS never follows up to ensure it has been done. That is on them, not the families nor the agencies.
5. DHS said licensure will protect the children, how exactly? And why is DHS having a meltdown when sadly abuse happened in a Somali owned autism center who did the right thing and reported it. We as autism families have reported abuse in autism centers such as Minnesota Autism Center for years and DHS never listened to the families. I see that as differential treatment by DHS.
6. Please hold DHS and yourselves accountable for the lack of oversight and training for autism centers and autism families. I have also given you ideas on how to

streamline EIDBI policies to align with surrounding states. In fact, this committee raised the reimbursement rate a couple of years ago against my testimony. Human services is not a business, but if you legislators keep raising the reimbursement rate, it will attract the wrong people. Please blame yourselves for this.

7. I want to inform you the newest program (CFSS) that DHS has unleashed is anything but smooth. The day when DHS releases a smooth program, is the day I will party like it is 1999. There is again no oversight, no clear language for families of who does what by when. It is taking months and months for the family to get any services after their MN choice assessment and the counties are just winging it without adequate support from DHS. I ask that you hold DHS accountable and stop them from releasing programs that are not ready to be implemented.
8. They should have done more training for consultation agencies and counties and why are you giving access to a responsible party who has no relation to the child their protective medical information? There is no background study done for the responsible person, they do not get paid but you give them access to sensitive information. How is that right? We as autism families depend on our legislators to think through things before and make sure it is right. CFSS needs to change as it is not working.
9. Finally, if the goal this year is to cut disability services, why don't you start with the state of Minnesota giving hundreds of millions of dollars annually to MCOs without any measurable audit nor oversight. I say this respectfully, to those of us looking in from the outside, it seems that legislator's right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.
10. You cannot keep picking on the vulnerable disability community while you let the big MCOs get prepaid Medicaid funds without care. How can you be human and do that?

Thanks again for your time.

Sincerely,
Idil Abdull – Somali Autism Mom