

Written Testimony of Anisa Hagi-Mohamed

Board Chair, Maangaar Voices
Parent of Three Autistic Children

Minnesota Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair: Sen. John A. Hoffman

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Chair Hoffman, members of the committee, and Governor Walz,

My name is **Anisa Hagi-Mohamed**, and I am the **Board Chair of Maangaar Voices**, an organization advocating for the immigrant autism community. I am a caregiver, a **mother of three autistic children**, two of whom receive waiver services. Beyond that, I am an **unpaid peer parent advocate**, working with families—many of whom are immigrants and people of color—helping them navigate **county, school, and medical systems** so their children get the services they need.

I am here today to urge you to **reconsider the proposed \$1.2 billion in cuts to disability services**. For families like mine, waivers are not a luxury—they are a **lifeline**. They allow our children to receive **in-home support, alternative therapies, and respite care**, keeping them safe, engaged, and able to thrive. But instead of expanding access, these cuts will **further limit essential services, increase barriers for families already struggling to access care, and push providers out of the system**.

Drowning Families in Bureaucracy Instead of Providing Real Support

What frustrates me most is the strategy behind these cuts. It's not just about reducing funding—it's about **burying families in bureaucracy, technicalities, and endless terminology**. The language in these bills is so dense, so disconnected from real-life experiences, that most families don't even know what's happening until it's too late.

Families like mine don't have the privilege of sitting in meetings all day or decoding policy language. **We're working. We're caregiving. We're surviving.** Many parents—especially those from immigrant communities—are balancing multiple jobs and night shifts while also being full-time caregivers to disabled children. Decisions about our children's futures are being made **while we are working, while we are exhausted from overnight caregiving, and while we are too overwhelmed to fight back**.

Legislation should be about **increasing access, not making it harder for families to understand what's being taken from them**. This approach is unfair, unethical, and unacceptable.

Governor Walz—This is Personal for You Too

Governor Walz, I want to acknowledge something personal. As a father of a child with **Nonverbal Learning Disorder**, you understand what it means to fight for individualized supports. You've spoken publicly about Gus's journey, and how families like ours rely on a strong support system. **This budget is not just about families like mine—it's about yours too. It's about ensuring that all families raising children with disabilities have access to the services they need.**

A Call to Action

I urge this committee to:

1. **Restore full funding to waiver programs** so children don't lose the critical support they rely on.
2. **Ensure oversight reforms do not drive out diverse providers**, who are often the only culturally competent support for our communities.
3. **Stop passing policies in a way that drowns families in technicalities, while making it nearly impossible for them to advocate for themselves.**

This is not just about a budget. It is about real families, real children, and real futures at stake. **I ask you to stand with us and protect the services that help our children thrive.**

Thank you.