

Senate File 1418 Council on Direct Support Professionals

Chief Author, The Honorable Senator John A. Hoffman (34, DFL)

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Introduction of S.F. 1418: The Honorable Senator John A. Hoffman, Chief Author

Testifiers:

Jesse Bethke Gomez, MMA, Executive Director, Metropolitan Center for Independent Living

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Background: In July of 2018 the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) hosted a community meeting to learn of the direct care concerns from people who rely upon direct care services of a direct care worker shortage. The result was a call to action. Jesse Bethke Gomez, Executive Director for Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL) was asked by DHS to provide a recap of that meeting at subsequent meetings.

This effort along with growing concerns resulted in 2016 of the following: A Cross-Agency Direct Care and Support Workforce Shortage Working Group (MN DEED and DHS) was charged by the Olmsted Subcabinet of developing direct care recommendations. MCIL Executive Director Bethke Gomez was among the initial members of this Work Group. Mr. Bethke Gomez served as a technical writer for the report entitled: “Recommendations to Expand, Diversify and Improve Minnesota’s Direct Care and Support Workforce,” which was approved by Minnesota’s Olmstead Sub-cabinet in March of 2018

Since 2018, Mr. Bethke Gomez has continued to be part of a 38 member ad hoc direct care working group hosted by the Disability Services Division of DHS that has continued to focus on what has now become the severe direct care worker shortage crisis. The workgroup volunteered to provide input on how best to proceed with addressing the direct care workforce needs for all lines of direct care services for both people with disabilities and older adults. The result is Senate File 1418.

Thanks to the learnings by MCIL in working with over 26 colleges and universities within the PCA College Service Corps, a pilot project supported by the Disability Services Division, Mr. Bethke Gomez recognized that Minnesota needs a macro strategy to harness the power of our post-secondary institutions and other training providers in recruiting and training more job seekers and direct care providers to meet the needs of Minnesota’s growing populations who rely upon direct care services in order to address the macro crisis of the severe direct care workforce shortage. This idea of harnessing the power of postsecondary and other education institutions as part of a direct care workforce platform is already a major take-away from the PCA College Service Corps.

The Purpose of S.F. 1418: The Council on Direct Support Professionals is to be established to develop a statewide strategic plan to address the shortage of direct support professionals and to promote improvement in the availability of direct support services in all areas of the state This legislation proposes a 21-member committee led by the DHS Commissioner and has Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota Department of Health and others along with people with lived experience and providers.

Duties and Powers: (1) Advocate for the expansion of existing effective pathways for recruitment, education, training, employment, skill development, and competitive compensation of direct support professionals;

(2) develop a statewide strategic plan to increase the number of qualified direct support professionals, reduce job vacancies among direct support service providers, reduce job vacancies among direct support service recipients seeking to directly employ a direct support professional, retain direct support professionals, and reduce turnover among direct support professionals;

(3) identify implementable strategies to expand educational and employment pathways for jobseekers, students in college, or individuals employed or trained in other trades or industries to become qualified direct support professionals;

Duties and Powers continued:

- (4) formulate a recommended strategic direct support professional career lattice platform based on Minnesota's current and potential direct support professional standards and job classifications, a compensation analysis by standard occupational classifications codes of comparable professions and competing employment opportunities, and an assessment of new direct support professional career lattice levels, including but not limited to postsecondary-credentialed direct support professional positions and college credit-based experiential learning opportunities;
- (5) assess the development of additional postsecondary or other educational strategies to expand the direct support professional workforce;
- (6) assess the opportunities to improve access to affordable and quality benefits for direct support professionals;
- (7) conduct an economic assessment of the state's investment in direct support services and providers and the impact of those investments on Minnesota's economy;
- (8) promote respectful and safe working conditions for direct support professionals and prevention of exploitation of direct support professionals;
- (9) publish recommendations related to the council's purposes, goals, and work achieved through the council's activities; and
- (10) provide recommended changes to state statutes, laws, rules, and departmental policies necessary to implement the council's recommendations.

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February 28, 2025

Subject: Minnesota Senate File 1062 and Senate File 1418

Dear Members of Minnesota Health and Human Services Committee,

Stratis Health is writing to offer our support for and commitment to two pieces of legislation before you which are intended to support the direct care workforce in Minnesota. SF 1418 establishes a direct care certification program and SF 1062 establishes a human service direct support professional certification pilot program.

Stratis Health is a Minnesota-based independent nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization whose mission is to lead collaboration and innovation to improve health. For more than 50 years, we have pursued a vision to be the collaborative force that builds capacity across settings and services to accelerate improvement, demonstrate value, and foster a health system that is safe, effective, timely, patient-centered, efficient, and equitable.

Direct support professionals are a critical component in improving health and care for those with disabilities and others in our community. The actions proposed in these bills align with our mission and values, and we encourage your committee to act favorably on them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer P. Lundblad".

Jennifer P. Lundblad, PhD, MBA
President & CEO

Stratis Health is a nonprofit organization that leads collaboration and innovation in health care quality and safety and serves as a trusted expert in facilitating improvement for people and communities.