

3/21/2025

Re: Support for SF 2796 – Waiver Case Management Rate Increase

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for SF 2796, which seeks to address the human services workforce crisis by increasing reimbursement rates for waiver case management and establishing a long-term framework for fair compensation and workforce stability.

Country Services, Inc. is a small company that has been providing waiver case management for over 25 years, currently serving Washington County, Goodhue County, and Lake County. Every day, our 16 case managers help individuals with disabilities access critical services, coordinate care, and advocate for their needs, allowing them to live independently. However, despite the essential nature of this work, reimbursement rates have not increased since 2015, and agencies like ours are struggling to recruit and retain qualified case managers.

The workforce shortage has reached a crisis point. In over 25 years of case management experience, I have never witnessed this level of transience in the field. The rate of pay we can offer case managers is now completely out of alignment with the expectations of the role. Case management is a professional level position with high-stakes responsibilities, requiring intensive training and skill. The demands of the role combined with the insufficient pay have increased turnover to a breaking point. Every open position creates strain for the case managers remaining, which then leads to more people leaving the field. Supervisors must now focus on coverage for the open positions, instead of providing the training and support to the case managers. Without action, the situation will continue to worsen, leaving people with disabilities without the consistent, high-quality case management support they need.

SF 2796 takes essential steps to stabilize the waiver case management workforce by:

- Increasing reimbursement rates to help agencies offer competitive wages and retain skilled professionals.
- Requiring an annual labor market analysis to ensure rates reflect real workforce conditions.
- Establishing a structured review process to prevent future stagnation in funding.

These changes will help address workforce shortages, reduce service disruptions, and ensure that people with disabilities receive the high-quality case management they deserve. Case managers ensure state disability funds are used effectively, and investing in this workforce now will prevent higher costs down the road.

Failing to act means more case managers leaving the field, more families struggling to navigate complex systems alone, and more Minnesotans with disabilities losing access to vital supports. By passing SF 2796, Minnesota can make a much-needed investment in the stability and well-being of both case managers and the people they serve.

We urge you to support this critical legislation. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to strengthening Minnesota's human services workforce. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions at paula@countryservicesinc.com or 651-270-5903.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Goeldner", written in a cursive style.

Paula Goeldner, LSW
Chief Executive Officer
Country Services, Inc.