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March 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.

Pinnacle Services, Inc. provides Case Management, Residential, and Vocational Support Services and currently serve individuals on Developmental Disability (DD), Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI), Brain Injury (BI), and Elderly Waiver (EW), and Alternative Care (AC) programs in Hennepin, Dakota, Chisago, Ramsey, Scott, and Wright counties. Every day, our 125 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. The primary responsibility of our Human Resources department is now to recruit case managers. We invest an enormous amount of time and money in recruitment and marketing to meet the ongoing need for case managers. Individuals who accept positions no longer consistently stay. New recruits often leave the position before training can be completed due to the complexity of the work and demands of those we serve. More experienced case managers are leaving due to ever present need to provide coverage due to the insufficient number of case managers delivering the service. Their departure puts additional pressure on the Human Resources team to fill even more positions. It is a cycle that cannot be broken when reimbursement for the service has not increased in 10 years despite the complexity of the work increasing year over year. We must be funded sufficiently to hire and retain experienced, seasoned case managers to provide the quality service Minnesotans deserve and to train the next generation workforce. 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 Jill.Cihlar@pinnacleservices.org or 612-977-3111.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Cihlar', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jill Cihlar, CEO
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