March 3, 2026

Dear Chair Klein and Senators of the Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee,

I am writing in support of expanding coverage for infertility treatment (SF1961/HF1758), as this is critically needed for many individuals and families who are working to build their families. I also respectfully ask that you consider including acupuncture services as part of this expanded coverage.

As an acupuncturist, I am part of a profession with a long history of treating menstrual disorders, including infertility and menopause. In many cultures, acupuncture has been used for centuries as a primary form of care for reproductive health. Despite this established history, acupuncture is not currently a covered service for the treatment of infertility, though some insurance providers have begun recognizing its value and offering limited coverage.

My colleagues and I previously submitted a report to the Department of Commerce outlining the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture, as well as its longstanding role in cultures that rely on traditional East Asian medicine as an integral part of healthcare.

At present, acupuncture coverage in Minnesota is extremely limited. HealthPartners and Minnesota Medicaid provide some coverage for menstrual disorders, which significantly affect quality of life during the childbearing years. However, infertility treatment remains excluded. Many other insurance plans do not provide meaningful coverage for menstrual-related conditions, even though these disorders can impact daily functioning, workplace productivity, school attendance, and long-term reproductive health.

Menstrual disorders are often a contributing factor to infertility. When left untreated, they can lead to increased stress, missed work or school, and diminished overall well-being. Expanding coverage to include acupuncture for infertility would improve quality of life for women and families navigating these challenges.

During a previous committee hearing, it was acknowledged that many individuals already incorporate acupuncture into their infertility care. Infertility treatment is an emotionally and physically demanding process, often accompanied by anxiety, hormonal side effects, and significant stress. Acupuncture provides meaningful support by helping regulate menstrual cycles, reduce physical discomfort, and ease the emotional strain that patients experience throughout treatment.

With birth rates declining and more individuals requiring assistance to conceive, it is essential that we ensure access to comprehensive and supportive care options. Including acupuncture as a covered treatment for infertility would help individuals and families access the full range of services they need during this deeply personal and challenging journey.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to improving access to patient-centered care.

As an acupuncturist who cares deeply about the well-being of Minnesota families, I believe acupuncture must remain an accessible option for those navigating infertility.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Bolash, L.Ac.

Crystal, MN

Summary of Community and Candidate Surveys on Acupuncture Coverage

Surveys conducted at the Hennepin County Fair and among candidates running for public office in 2024 demonstrate clear and consistent support for acupuncture as a covered treatment option for pain management. Together, these surveys reflect both broad community endorsement and meaningful policy-level recognition of acupuncture's role in addressing pain and improving patient well-being.

Acupuncturists for a Healthy Minnesota. (2024). *Candidate & community survey of acupuncture* (Updated 8/13/2024). https://acupuncturists4healthymn.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/candidate-community-survey-of-acupuncture-updated-8.13.2024-final.pdf

Acupuncturists for a Healthy Minnesota. (2024). *Hennepin County Fair survey* (2024). https://acupuncturists4healthymn.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/hennepin-county-fair-survey-2024.docx

Historical References.

Bonnie Bolash

Acupuncture has been practiced in the United States since the 1700s, with historical accounts noting that French physicians were among the first to introduce acupuncture techniques to American medical circles. According to Food and Drug Administration report on the regulation of acupuncture needles,[i] the practice has been part of the U.S. medical landscape far longer than many realize.

Acupuncture's presence in the United States is also deeply tied to immigrant communities, where it has been used for generations as an essential component of culturally rooted healthcare. Over time, it has become increasingly recognized within the broader U.S. healthcare framework, reflecting both its long-standing cultural significance and its enduring role in supporting patient well-being.

Since 1972[ii], the Internal Revenue Service has classified acupuncture as a deductible medical expense when filing taxes. Insurance coverage for acupuncture began expanding in the 1970s.[iii]

The 1970s marked a renewed national awareness of acupuncture following President Nixon's visit to China. During that time, early U.S. research[iv] began demonstrating clinical benefits, particularly in pain management. Insurance coverage gradually expanded, including Medicaid coverage[v] in Minnesota in the 1980s and inclusion within Minnesota's workers' compensation system.[vi] Most recently, Medicare began covering acupuncture for certain conditions in 2020.[vii]

In 1996, acupuncture needles were formally classified by the Food and Drug Administration [viii] [ix] as medical devices for use by licensed practitioners, providing clearer regulatory oversight. Prior to that regulatory clarification—particularly from the 1970s through the early 1990s—importation barriers created significant challenges for practitioners, and access to sterile, approved needles was inconsistent. As a result, informal and unregulated distribution channels developed to meet demand.[x]

Across cultures, distinct needling traditions have developed, including American, French, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and broader European styles. Acupuncture needles themselves have undergone minimal structural change over time. They are fine, non-cutting needles with handles, produced in various lengths and gauges to support different treatment approaches. Techniques range from shallow insertion to deeper applications that may reach muscle tissue, joint spaces, or periosteal levels. Needles may be retained for varying periods depending on therapeutic goals.

Licensed Acupuncturists today complete advanced graduate-level education, earning either master's or doctoral degrees. Our training includes extensive classroom instruction and supervised clinical experience to ensure safe, effective patient care.

[i] Lytle, C. D. (1993). An overview of acupuncture. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Devices and Radiological Health. https://downloads.regulations.gov/FDA-1993-P-0434-0014/content.pdf

[ii] IRS Rule 72-593 https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3296944&seq=194

[iii] Get Punctured. You Get Paid. The El Dorado Times. (January 31, 1973). . Newspapers.com. Retrieved February 24, 2026, from https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-el-dorado-times/107016121/

[iv] Proceedings: NIH Acupuncture Research Conference: February 28 and March 1, 1973, Bethesda, Maryland. (1973). United States: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of General Medical Sciences. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Proceedings_NIH_Acupuncture_Research_Con/JJpp7ciKjaoC?hl=en&gbpv=0

[v] State Register 10 October 1988 Volume 13, Number 15
revisor.mn.gov/state_register/13/15/?search="Acupuncture

[vi] State Register Monday 22 September 1986 VOLUME 11, NUMBER 12
revisor.mn.gov/state_register/11/12/?search="Acupuncture

[vii] **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (n.d.).** *Acupuncture (30.3).* Medicare Coverage Database. https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/ncd.aspx?NCDId=373

[viii] Watanabe, T. (1996, March 30). *FDA upgrades acupuncture needles' status*. *Los Angeles Times*. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-03-30-mn-52975-story.html

[ix] Wright, R. (1996, March 30). *FDA removes bar to coverage of acupuncture by insurance*. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/03/30/fda-removes-bar-to-coverage-of-acupuncture-by-insurance/5cbfaed1-074b-4ffd-9fc3-91bdd8f93e17/

[x] A Black Market in Needles. The San Francisco Examiner, October 7, 1979, Page 9. via Newspapers.com https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-san-francisco-examiner-acupuncture/121501324/ accessed February 24, 2026