



Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Health Finance Committee,

On behalf of WellShare International, I write to express our support for the Community Health Worker (CHW) line item in the Governor's Supplemental Budget to educate, strengthen, equip, evaluate and grow the CHW Workforce.

CHWs are the health equity workforce. Many CHWs represent BIPOC communities. They come from the communities they serve, providing the link to coverage and care, and are an investment in those communities. Research indicates that CHWs show a return on investment of at least three dollars for every dollar invested in them. They serve as liaisons between health care, social service systems, and communities. They also work in other systems such as public safety, public schools, childcare, elder services and many more.

At WellShare International, our mission is to partner with diverse communities to promote health and well-being. We envision communities with equitable health care and resources where all individuals live healthy and fulfilling lives. Using a community health worker model, WellShare reduces health disparities by reaching underserved communities to promote health, prevent disease, and increase access to health services. We work with refugee and immigrant communities in Minnesota and with underserved rural populations in East Africa across the individuals' lifespan. WellShare hires CHWs and program coordinators from the communities they serve and partners with numerous community-based organizations, key community leaders, and religious leaders such as Imams and pastors. We are uniquely positioned within communities, with firsthand knowledge of how systematic racism affects the communities in which we work. Our integrative approach across many impact areas (e.g. maternal and child health, youth leadership and engagement, chronic and infectious disease, workforce and economic development, mental health, health system transformation) produces results. Through multi-sectoral partnerships, we promote home, clinic-based and community-wide preventative health practices to reduce the impact of diseases such as diabetes, Covid-19, cardiovascular, and sexually transmitted diseases. We advocate for our clients and share narratives of their lived experiences in a way that drives transformative system change. Invited to the table as community health experts, we partner with clinic systems, health plans, social service providers and government agencies to reduce barriers to social and health systems.

CHWs' work is trauma-informed and they are uniquely positioned to improve health outcomes and health equity within our state. This funding will lead to increased healthcare access, lower healthcare costs and improved health outcomes for your constituents facing health inequities and barriers to care. Additionally, this bill will further support and grow the CHW workforce. WellShare International respectfully urges you to support the funding for CHWS in the Governor's Budget. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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