

March 29, 2022

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

RE: HF 3852

Dear Chair Schultz and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center is a statewide non-profit organization that provides support and advocacy services to victims of elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. We strongly support the funding proposals in Representative Noor's bill HF 3852.

Since our founding in 2014, we have partnered with county Adult Protection Service (APS) agencies and DHS. We strongly encourage addressing the structural inequities within our APS systems, so that APS can provide better protective and supportive services to vulnerable adults, many of whom are older adults, living in their own homes in the community. We know firsthand from our direct work with victims and their families that the public is either confused or unaware of the Adult Protection System. Victims and their families become frustrated when county APS teams are unable or declines to open a case.

In July of 2021, [DHS released a report detailing the APS case acceptance process](#) that we believe is a call to action. It tells us two important hard truths:

- Minnesota lags behind the rest of the country in providing APS services to vulnerable adults. On average, our Adult Protection system provides services to only 24% of the eligible vulnerable adults experiencing maltreatment. The national average is 50%.
- Two groups of vulnerable adults experiencing maltreatment are statistically more likely to be screened out of APS than other groups:
 - Racial and ethnic minorities; and
 - Persons with mental health issues, specifically chemical dependency.

What the report does not show is how our historic underfunding of county adult protection has left our older and vulnerable adults behind. With no significant state or federal funding, we over-rely on county budgets to fulfill the mandates of the Vulnerable Adult Act.

We applaud DHS's approach in HF1432 to a full-scale, multi-phased effort to update Minnesota's Vulnerable Adult Act and Adult Protection system. Still, we know that significant updates to our entire APS system, including the changes called for in the report, cannot happen

without additional resources. We believe the one-time funding put forward in this bill will help bridge the gap until the state budget is properly adjusted to support equitable provision of adult protective services.

The pilot projects created in this bill will help develop creative solutions to the long-standing inequity issues within the system, so as to better shape DHS's Adult Protection redesign process in future years. The working groups developed in this bill will help implement the recommendations from the report to address inequities in the APS system.

We look forward to working with DHS, lawmakers, and other stakeholders to continue to redesign the APS system so it works for all vulnerable adults in Minnesota.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda Vickstrom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Amanda Vickstrom
Executive Director