May 1, 2023

Dear Chairs Hoffman, Noor, and members of the Human Services Conference Committee,

I am sending you a letter regarding SF 2934 and HF 2847 and the Governor’s proposal to move FRS (family Residential Services) homes from the current framework rate to a flat tiered rate as of 1/1/2026. If this happens many family homes will close as this flat rate is not sustainable to cover the cost of staffing and overhead to provide care in private homes.

I also want to make sure that you support the HF 999 and SF 1015 for the Best Life Alliance and DWRS frameworks rate increase. Our homes need to be able to pay our supplemental staff a fair wage like all kinds of providers, or we cannot get time away and burn out will result or more homes closing down. Please support this measure.

Please the attached letter explaining more in detail about what we do and how it meets the “Person Centered Approach” that MN DHS wants us to have and has rolled out in recent years, to allow the disabled person to choose the environment they want to live in. We have been providing services for over 20 years and have seen some good changes to the programming along the way. However, this proposal is hurtful and unnecessary as it limits and restricts the options available to disabled persons.

The Governor’s proposal is to move FRS to a flat tier system of payment and add Life Sharing skills to that group. It would be a $11.700 million fiscal savings in 2026-27. They feel that FRS have, “a DWRS rate framework, but the service is unique among DWRS services.” That is misleading, however, because we follow the same rules and regulations as all the other groups on the DWRS framework such as CRS, (Community Residential Services), Employment services, Day programs, Customized Living, and others. We have the same charting criteria, goal setting criteria, programming rules and licensing rules as other facilities and we are held to the same standards of care as other kinds of providers in different facilities.

We have supplemental staff to help us so that we can do outings, paperwork, interact with our people and maybe have an evening or day off. That is no different in any other framework setting except we live in the home and that is our choice. If we move to the flat tier rate many homes will close as rates will not be sustainable. FRS homes want to be paid a fair rate and myself as the primary staff and doing all the other things an FRS provider must do I deserve a fair rate of pay in order to provide the kind of private home-based setting that many disabled persons want to live in. It is their choice and we need to have the financial support to continue it.

During Covid shutdowns, we went for several months without time off just like many other providers did in other settings. We want to be paid the same, just like others who do what we do and who are held to the same standards of care. Moving just the Family Residential Service providers to a tier rate is not good.

The flat rate is not sustainable for our home to continue to function, as we would be cut 40 to 54 % in compensation for services provided. We beg of you to not let this flat rate change happen to FRS homes. We serve a great need just like CRS do.

**Please keep us under the same and equal rate system like the CRS homes, especially in a time when our state has a budge SURPLUS of many BILLION dollars.** It does not make sense to cut this form of living opportunity for disabled persons – they deserve to keep the options they have had for many years.

I also want to make sure that you support the HF 999 and SF 1015 for the Best Life Alliance and DWRS frameworks rate increase. Our homes need to be able to pay our supplemental staff a fair wage like all others or we cannot get time away. Please support this measure. Thank you for your consideration.

Mike Jewell and Sarah Jewell

Jewell Family Foster Care Programs

33294 112th Ave.

Avon, MN 56310.

Enclosure – Letter to Sen. Hoffman