



February 2, 2023

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee

RE: **HF999 (Hanson, J.)**

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's support of HF999. It is critical to refine the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) by implementing regular adjustments to the Competitive Workforce Factor (CWF). This is an important, long-term solution to reduce the wage gap between direct support professionals (DSPs) and comparable occupations. Additionally, this proposal allows DWRS to better reflect market costs, allowing providers to adapt and be responsive to market conditions.

LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees who serve one in 65 Minnesotans every year. This includes home and community-based services (HCBS) that are innovative and person-centered for people with disabilities. LSS' wide array of services are designed to meet the unique needs of individuals in a variety of settings and support them to live the life they imagine for themselves. At the core of delivering these services are DSPs who are dedicated to helping people achieve their dreams and remain healthy and living as independently as possible in their home and community.

We are thankful for past investments in the DWRS as well as the implementation of the CWF; however, reimbursement rates for HCBS for people with disabilities have not covered the true cost of service for several years. Further, a workforce shortage coupled with a high demand for caregiving professionals has exacerbated staffing resulting in an ongoing challenge for our state. This has limited the ability of community providers to sustain competitive wages and benefits that reflect the professionalism and importance of the services provided. HF999 provides an opportunity for sustainable, long-term investment to strengthen, retain and develop the DSP workforce.

Please support HF999 to make investments in the DSP workforce and strengthen services for people with disabilities. This is critical to providing adequate and stable resources that ensure our neighbors are supported when, where and how they need it. Thank you, again, for this opportunity. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Thueson", written over a horizontal line.

Patrick Thueson
President
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota