

March 28, 2023



Re: HF 2335 Human Services Finance and Policy Omnibus

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee

Chair Noor and Committee Members,

Thank you for the work you have done this session to bring attention to the many complex issues impacting Minnesotans with disabilities statewide. We see many provisions included in the omnibus bill that will be directly beneficial to people with disabilities.

We are grateful for the inclusion of the following:

- The provisions to **phase out the use of subminimum wage in Minnesota** (Article 1; Sections 1, 10-12, 25-26, 50-52): Ending this antiquated practice will benefit all of Minnesota, but especially people with disabilities. Not only is it a civil rights violation that has gone on for too long, but it has kept people with disabilities segregated and created inequities in the workforce for all people with disabilities—not just those who are paid subminimum wages. Thank you for your commitment to increasing wages and workforce participation for people with disabilities.
- The long overdue **changes to the Personal Care Assistance (PCA) program to allow PCAs to drive** (Article 1; Sections 17-20): This small change will have a major impact on the lives of people with disabilities who access PCA services. This bill ensure people have access to their communities.
- **Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) rate increases** (Article 1; Sections 28 and 30), **PCA/Community First Services and Supports (CFSS) Rate increases** (Article 1; Sections 37-39), **Rate increases for chore services, homemaker services, home-delivered meals, and home care services** (Article 1, Sections 53 and 55): We need to address the direct care workforce shortage from all angles, which includes rate increases so that we can better retain the staff we have. Many DWRS services and PCA/CFSS are critical to supporting people to live in their own homes, however, the direct care staffing shortage has made this increasingly difficult for Minnesotans with disabilities. Many people with disabilities face a difficult choice of living in their own homes, in their communities or having to move to more restrictive, expensive settings to get their basic needs met. Much of this is due to the critical direct care shortage. Investments in rate increases that in turn boost wages are one important part of the solution to make sure people have true informed choice in where they live.
- **Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Incentive Grants Program** (Article 1; Section 43): One factor contributing to the workforce shortage is the lack of benefits for these critical roles. People in direct support positions deserve to be valued for their important work. Incentives for the direct care workforce are another important part of the solution.
- **Parent-To-Parent Grants to Organizations** (Article 7, Section 2): Supporting families to build natural supports will have long-lasting impacts on the families and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This is a great way to build more natural supports for Minnesotan parents, families, and, most importantly, children with IDD.

- **Direct Care Service Corps Pilot Project** (Article 7, Section 2): This provision provides a creative solution that upholds the informed choice of disabled Minnesotans who want to remain in their own homes.

As you continue negotiations throughout the rest of this legislative session, we hope you will consider proposals that were missing from this omnibus bill such as:

- **Expansion of Shared Services and Changes to Individualized Home Supports** (HF 716): This is a workforce shortage solution that is cost-effective, uses less staff to care for more people, and upholds the informed choice and autonomy of people with disabilities.
- **Eliminating the Tax on Disability in Medical Assistance for Employed People with Disabilities (MA-EPD) Program** (HF 1384) and **Parental Fees in Medical Assistance** (HF 1434): Individuals accessing MA-EPD and families of children with disabilities have one avenue to access supports and services they or their loved one need to survive, and we charge them to access it. These proposals will have a great benefit to people and their families accessing these programs.
- **Removing the 40-Hour Cap for Consumer Directed Supports (CDCS) and CFSS** (HF 240): This is a simple change that would make a big difference for families. This workforce shortage solution will ensure compensation for families who are providing care to their loved ones and supports people living in their own homes.
- **Task Force on Disability Services Accessibility** (HF 1043): This proposal works to ensure our state's disability services are accessible in ways that work for everyone and most importantly, that people with disabilities are included in the assessment and proposed solutions to accessibility barriers.

We are still in the process of analyzing all of the provisions included in the omnibus bill, and will provide a more thorough assessment as conference committees convene. We look forward to continued collaboration as you work to pass bills that have a positive impact on the lives of your constituents with disabilities and the Minnesotans with disabilities across the state. Thank you for the work you have done so far this session.

Sincerely,

Julia Page  
*Public Policy Director*