



April 16, 2024
House Human Services Finance Committee

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, we are writing in support of article 7, section 3 of the House Human Services omnibus bill which would direct the Department of Human Services to develop a strategy to invest in addressing health related social needs, including nutrition and housing support.

Children's Minnesota is the state's largest pediatric health care system. We see children and teens from all 87 counties and 60 percent of the counties in our surrounding states. We also serve a diverse patient population, and nearly 50% of our patients are enrolled in Medicaid. Our vision is to be every family's essential partner in raising healthier children and that starts with recognizing that 80% of what impacts the health of a child happens outside of our hospital and clinic walls. Equitable access to social supports, including food and housing, is essential to ensuring the health and wellness of children and their families.

Access to resources continues to be a priority identified by the communities we serve, as reflected in our most recent [Community Health Needs Assessment](#). Studies show that children experiencing homelessness or other types of housing instability are at higher risk for developmental and academic delays, behavioral and socioemotional challenges and child welfare system involvement, including out of home placement. Food insecurity is also of particular concern for young children as it can contribute to a variety of developmental challenges. For infants and toddlers experiencing food insecurity, this may include challenges related to the development of language, motor skills and cognitive functioning.¹

When families in our primary care clinics participate in a social needs screening, food insecurity and housing issues are regularly identified as top needs. Families can then meet with a community resource navigator through our [Community Connect program](#), which helps address their identified needs. If nutrition and housing supports were paid for by medical assistance, our capacity and the capacity of our community partners to support these families would increase in an incredibly impactful way.

Our communities are telling us what they need to be healthy. This bill gives Minnesota the opportunity to use current systems to invest in what we know supports families' health and overall well-being.

Sincerely,

James Burroughs
Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer
SVP Community and Government Relations
Children's Minnesota

Lauren Gilchrist
Sr. Director, Collective for Community Health
Children's Minnesota

¹ Carlson, E., Giovanelli, A., Chase, R., Spaeth, E., & Aviles, S. (2018). Minnesota early childhood risk, reach, and resilience: Key indicators of early childhood development in Minnesota, county by county. Wilder Research. <https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/minnesota-early-childhood-risk-and-reach>