



April 27, 2023

Dear Chair Hoffman, Chair Noor and members of the Human Services conference committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's comments on the omnibus human services finance and policy bill. We are grateful for your leadership as you make difficult decisions about this final budget as it will have immediate and long-term impacts on our communities.

As the need for home and community-based services grows, workforce challenges persist preventing adequate and stable resources that ensure our neighbors are supported when, where, and how they need it. We support provisions that improve access to service, build community connection, and remove barriers to health and well-being for our neighbors.

Updating the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS). Fully funding and implementing regular adjustments to the Competitive Workforce Factor and moving up the timing of inflationary adjustments in DWRS are important, long-term solutions. This will help providers adapt and be responsive to market conditions and reduce the wage gap between direct support professionals and comparable occupations. **Please accept the Senate position.**

Increase Limits for Paid Parents and Spouses in CFSS and CDCS. This is a strong solution to support people who have more than one family caregiver in their household as well as households with multiple people accessing CDCS or CFSS. This proposal will alleviate caregiver burnout while also acknowledging the professionalism and importance of caregiving work. **Please accept the Senate position.**

Supported Decision-Making. Establishing state funding is an important way to increase access to this person-centered service for people with disabilities, older adults, and their support networks of family, friends, and professionals. This will support the continued culture shift toward this less restrictive alternative to guardianship and conservatorship. **Please accept the Senate position.**

Life Sharing Development. Life Sharing is an innovative, person-centered service model that supports independent living and has the potential to mitigate the impact of the workforce crisis on people with disabilities. We applaud the promotion of this service but have concerns about the proposed rates for Life Sharing as included in the House human service omnibus bill. **Please accept the Senate position** which includes the development of Life Sharing in consultation with



providers, people with disabilities, advocacy organizations, and lead agencies prior to establishing a reimbursement model.

Senior Nutrition Program Increases. Our older adult population is growing while more Minnesotans are facing food insecurity. Additionally, the costs of food and transportation for meals has drastically increased as state funds have not. Increased investment to provide affordable, nutritious meals is critical to helping our neighbors live healthier, more active, and independent lives. **Please accept the Senate position,** and we respectfully request adding this funding to the base.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration on these issues. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information.

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