



May 2, 2023

The Honorable Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health and Human
Services Committee
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
90 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Tina Liebling
Chair, House Health Finance and
Policy Committee
477 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Chair Liebling, and members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee:

On behalf of Southside Harm Reduction Services, I write to express our support for SF2995, the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill.

Southside Harm Reduction Services is the largest syringe service program in the state of MN and we work to reduce overdose deaths and prevent the spread of HIV, Hep C, and other infections related to drug use and homelessness.

We voice support for the following measures:

- The **Comprehensive Drug Overdose and Morbidity Prevention Act**. This funding directly supports high impact interventions that we hope will prevent overdose and save lives. Key activities are:
 - Culturally specific services for our most vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness.
 - Increased funding for syringe service programs and creation of Overdose Prevention Hubs
 - Critical monitoring of the illicit drug supply by the MDH Public Health Lab.
- **HF 2041/SF2261**. HF 2041/SF2261 supports our communities' ability to respond to the overdose crisis by supporting syringe service programs and removes harsh penalties for paraphernalia, penalties that only work to increase overdose deaths, increase transmission of costly and unnecessary disease.
- **The HIV Equity Grants Proposal**. MN faces two separate HIV outbreaks among people who use drugs and/or live outside. These outbreaks deeply impact people of color, and this proposal replenishes previously reduced HIV testing funding that Southside and other organizations rely on.
- The general fund for MDH to conduct an analysis of mortality among people experiencing homelessness.



As the opioid epidemic and overdose crisis continue to worsen due to the increase of synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, MN needs to seek and support new and proven responses to the crisis. There also need to be funding and legislative measures that directly address the stark race-rate disparities MN faces in the OD crisis. The measures listed above are a step in the right direction

We look forward to working with you during the conference committee process as a resource to you in assembling your final bill. Please contact me at (612)924-5934 or jack.martin@southsideharmreduction.org if Southside can be of assistance to the committee.

Sincerely,

Jack Martin
Executive Director
Southside Harm Reduction Services

Cc: Sen. Jim Abeler, Ranking Minority, Senate Human Services Committee

Sen. Liz Boldon, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Sen. Robert Kupec, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Sen. Kelly Morrison, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Rep. Robert Bierman, Vice Chair, House Health Finance and Policy Committee
Rep. Heather Keeler, Vice Chair, House Children and Families Finance and Policy
Rep. Dave Pinto, Chair, House Children and Families Finance and Policy
Rep. Joe Schomacker, Republican Lead, House Health Finance and Policy Committee
Commissioner Brooke Cunningham, Minnesota Department of Health