

May 9, 2022

RE: SF 4410 – Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill

Sen. Jim Abeler
Sen. Paul Utke
Sen. Michelle Benson
Sen. Mark Koran
Sen. John Hoffman

Rep. Tina Liebling
Rep. Jennifer Schultz
Rep. Aisha Gomez
Rep. Dave Pinto
Rep. Tony Albright

Members of the HHS Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to help inform your work to create meaningful health and human services investments this session. The Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) is hopeful for health and human service investments this session that ensure all Minnesotans can thrive.

MSSA is made up of over 4,000 health and human service professionals statewide. Our members cover the health and human service spectrum—direct care professionals, social workers, case managers, etc.—and are employed by for-profit and non-profit entities, as well as state and local government agencies. We want to express our support for the following provisions included in House and Senate omnibus bills, as well as for provisions not included that we wish to see in your final agreement.

- **Health and Human Services Workforce Investments.** MSSA members touch every area of the health and human services workforce and have been deeply invested in measures to solve the HHS workforce crisis. We are grateful for the measures included in both the House and Senate omnibus bill proposals to revitalize the health and human services workforce, including increases to the personal care attendant (PCA) rate framework, lifting the 40-hour PCA cap for parents of minors and spouses, and allowing PCAs to bill for time spent driving. We are also supportive of House measures to establish mental health provider recruitment grants, behavioral health workforce incentive grants, a mental health provider loan forgiveness program, allowing remote supervision for social workers, and other meaningful investments and incentives to strengthening our health and human services workforce.
- **Investments in Housing and Shelter.** We are thankful for the House measure to include emergency shelter investments and the measure to modify countable income under the housing support program. MSSA members are particularly engaged in issues related to shelter and housing, which have been exacerbated for their clients during the pandemic.
- **Investments in children and families.** MSSA supports measures to ensure children and families can thrive, and that racial disparities in child welfare are eliminated. We support needed investments in both the House and Senate bills, including Quality Parenting Initiative funding, measures to prioritize child foster care placement with relatives, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) income limit increase. MSSA prefers the House language in the provision to increase SNAP income limits, as we believe the work

requirement language present in the Senate bill could place unnecessary burden on SNAP beneficiaries.

We are also supportive of House measures to invest in a qualified individual program and continuous improvement to assist in Family First Prevention Services Act implementation, increase the income disregard for the Minnesota Family Investment Program, expand intensive treatment for children in foster care, establish permanent funding for the Basic Sliding Fee childcare program, establish continuous Medical Assistance eligibility for children under 21, invest in the Child Care Assistance Program, and establish Medical Assistance coverage for former foster care youth who were enrolled in Medicaid in another state.

- **Investments in People with Disabilities.** MSSA advocates for the protection, inclusion, and civil rights advancement of people with disabilities, and we are excited to see investments in both House and Senate HHS proposals that advance care for those with disabilities. We are particularly excited to see the House measure to increase the Medical Assistance asset limit for people with disabilities and those over age 65.

We are also grateful for measures in both the House and Senate to provide rate increases for the base wage Disability Waiver Rate System providers, and investments for Life Sharing Services.

- **Investments in Mental Health.** We are thankful for the House measures to invest in children's psychiatric and PRTF beds. MSSA members Leo A. Hoffman Center, Northwood Children's Services, and North Homes Children and Family Services make up three of four contracted Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities in our state and are in need of the significant investment and support provided by your proposal.

We are thankful for the Senate measure to include funding for Adult Mental Health Initiative Grants, which will help MSSA members including 49 Minnesota counties, over 1,500 county employees, and many county-associated agencies. We hope to see this in your final proposal.

We hope that mental and behavioral health measures from the House and Senate, which includes many measures from SF3249, appear in a final budget proposal.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our support on behalf of our members and the clients they serve. Please reach out to us with questions, comments, or concerns at msancartier@mnssa.org.

Sincerely,

Marcia Milliken
Minnesota Children's Alliance
MSSA Legislative Co-Chair

Michelle SanCartier
Minnesota Social Service Association
MSSA Director of Public Policy & Advocacy

Terry Hildebrandt
The Salvation Army
MSSA Board President