

March 27, 2023

Chair Noor,

My name is Robert Wagner and I have worked on behalf of and with people with disabilities for the past four decades. Currently, I am a semi-working psychologist. Also, as a volunteer, I serve on the Minnesota Consortium for Citizen's with Disabilities Board (MNCCD) as well as the Arc Minnesota's public policy committee. HF 240, authored by Rep Reyer is a priority for both organizations. This bill would lift the 40-hour household cap for parents of minors and spouses on the CDCS and CFSS programs. I ask that you include this important bill and the funding in HF2847.

Previously, I worked as a supervisor and interim manager at Ramsey County disability services for nearly two decades. In that role, I saw the struggles people have in getting as well as retaining quality caregivers. Personally, I live with a spinal cord injury and know that struggle well too! I have significant support needs and am grateful for a committed and skilled spouse. She's unpaid but the quality of my life as well as my very life depends on her support. The last two years have been an incredible struggle to find Personal Care Assistants (PCAs). Because I use the Consumer Directed Community Support (CDCS) option, it was never a real problem in the past. Now, even though I pay a higher wage, it's a real problem.

I strongly support HF240 because of the dire need my fellow Minnesotan's face to find and retain quality PCAs. In my opinion, using family members to help individuals with disabilities as a partial "fix" during this challenging time is a no-brainer. The problem may be multicausal, but as part of the fix, it is pretty simple. Family members are committed, experienced and caring. At this time especially, why wouldn't we lift the 40-hour household cap?

Finally, it is a matter of fairness. Why would we penalize individuals with disabilities as well as their family members simply because they are related? I think it is discriminatory, shortsighted, and arbitrary.

Please listen to our plea: include HF240 in your HF2847 bill. Some things are complex, this is simple, and you have not only the opportunity but the obligation to help people not only thrive but also survive. Family members are reliable and ready to fill the need, just as my wife does when we don't have someone to help me get out of bed, dress and eat so I can go to work.

Sincerely and emphatically,

Robert M Wagner, LP