

April 1, 2025

Representative Mohamud Noor, Chair  
House Human Services Finance and Policy  
Committee  
Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar St  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Joe Schomacker, Chair  
House Human Services Finance and Policy  
Committee  
Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar St  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: H.F. 2523 – HIV/AIDS support services funding**

Dear Representative Pérez-Vega, Chairs Noor and Schomacker, and members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee,

We write to express our strong support for H.F. 2523, which supports critical support services for over 4,600 people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS that rely on Ryan White services to stay engaged in care. Over the last three years, our consortium of HIV service providers has systematically experienced cuts to programs funded by Ryan White rebate dollars. However, the latest \$9 million dollar cut by the Department of Health and Human Services has provided a devastating blow to our community. Over this same time period, the number of individuals living with HIV in Minnesota has increased dramatically, largely as a result of simultaneous, concurrent HIV, hepatitis C and syphilis outbreaks within the Twin Cities and Duluth area as well as increased numbers of individuals seeking refuge within Minnesota due to its long history of providing comprehensive, quality care to all individuals.

Many of the organizations within our consortium are reliant on Ryan White funding to support our service categories and without this critical funding we will not be able to provide the level of support required to both ensure positive health outcomes for individuals living with HIV and mitigate community transmission which has been an ongoing issue unique to our community since 2018.

As a collective, the consortium has a long history of providing critical support to individuals living with HIV, which has directly contributed to the downward trend of new diagnoses within the State, especially between 2014 and 2020. However, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the concurrent outbreaks, 2023 showed the highest number of new diagnoses over the past 10 years. While the consortium has worked collaboratively in response to the outbreaks, decreased funding levels have directly impeded organizational capacity due to overall decreased staffing and resources available to the community. The uptick in diagnoses will have significant community implications, and continued funding cuts will severely impede the efforts of this consortium to address those impacts.

**H.F. 2523** helps mitigate severe negative impacts by restoring critical funding. The aforementioned \$9M cut will limit outbreak responses and disproportionately impact the most marginalized people in our community such as racial and gender minorities, including

loss of housing for individuals, access to food and emergency financial services, case management services, in addition to other critical support services specific to individuals that are aging with HIV. These services not only help individuals stay engaged in care but also adherent to medications, which directly contributes to decreased community transmission. Individuals living with HIV in Minnesota already disproportionately live in poverty and are un/underinsured, with the burden falling more broadly on communities of color as well as gender and sexual minorities.

Without the support provided by **H.F. 2523**, co-occurring social determinants of health will continue to impede individuals from engagement in care, jeopardize the health outcomes of individuals, and cascade negative impact on the broader community. In order to adequately respond to the increased community needs, our consortium needs this critical funding. The health of our community relies on consistent, equitable funding to remove barriers and increased access to care and medications for all individuals living with HIV in the state of Minnesota.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward. We respectfully encourage this committee to support this legislation and look forward to discussing future opportunities to secure critical funding that supports individuals living with HIV in the State of Minnesota.



March 28, 2025

**RE: HF 2523– HIV/AIDS Support Services Funding**

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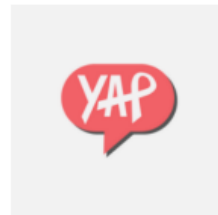
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ALIVENESS PROJECT



HENNEPIN COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH



Indigenous Peoples  
Task Force



## Testimony in Support of HF2523 (Perez Vega)

Lisa Lane, Chief External Affairs Officer, Open Arms of Minnesota, 4/1/25

Chair Schomaker, Chair Noor and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of HF2523. My name is Lisa Lane, I am the External Affairs Director at Open Arms of MN, an organization providing medically tailored meals and nutrition services to individuals living with HIV/AIDS and other serious illnesses.

For nearly four decades, our organization has witnessed firsthand the critical role that proper nutrition plays in the health outcomes of individuals living with HIV/AIDS. These individuals cannot simply access traditional food shelves due to complex co-morbidities (multiple illnesses) that require highly customized and restricted diets, and nutrition supports.

For individuals living with HIV/AIDS, access to proper nutrition is not merely a convenience but a medical necessity helping their medicines work most effectively and decreasing their risk of malnutrition. Without these specialized nutrition services, **240 of our clients will be without medically tailored meals and nutrition counseling** and face significantly worse health outcomes, increased hospitalization, and diminished quality of life.

House File 2523 is crucial because it will enable us to continue supporting clients who live with HIV **and** food insecurity—clients like Alex, whose life took a turn nearly two decades ago with an HIV diagnosis that left him devastated, wrote to us to say: *“What you’re doing for me is a game changer. Having good food and a balanced diet helps me a lot. A month ago, my doctor said I looked the best I had ever looked. My quality of life is much better now because I have the right foods to eat that make my whole body healthier.”*

Another client, James, recently wrote urging us to: *“Keep doing what you are doing for as long as you can. I recently became a client and now I experience firsthand all the hard work, time, and dedication that goes into making sure we eat well. My weekly meals are precious, rare gifts that keep me going.”*

Investing in HIV support services such as medically tailored meals helps reduce hospital visits, reduces malnourishment and can be the difference between living independently or needing more expensive and regular hospitalization.

I urge you to support HF2523 and help us continue our mission of providing life-saving nutrition to those who need it most. Thank you for your time and consideration.

March 28, 2025

Co-Chairs Schomacker and Noor and Members of the Human Services Finance and Policy committee,

OutFront Minnesota is our state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization and we write in support of HF 2523 and urge you to support critical public health work that benefits *all* Minnesotans.

HIV, despite many medical advancements and resources, is still a matter of significant policy and public health importance. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, as of 2023, there were 9,996 people living with HIV, with an estimated 1,100 more people believed to be living with undiagnosed HIV. In addition, there were 324 new cases of diagnosed people living with HIV, and two-thirds (66%) are from communities of color. These 324 new cases of HIV is a 24% increase from 2022, and it is the largest number of HIV cases in the last decade.<sup>1</sup>

Now is not the time to curtail our investments in this important work.

HIV prevention work is a smart investment that will save our state money in the long run - on productivity impacts, direct health care costs, and a whole host of ancillary services. We have seen that work in action across the multi-decade history of community and public health partnerships. This work will save lives, save money, and continue to build upon many years of important partnerships that have supported public health infrastructure and programming throughout this state.

OutFront Minnesota stands in support of HF 2523 and the critical HIV services and programs that it funds; we urge your support in these important investments in our state's communities.

Sincerely,

Kat Rohn  
Executive Director

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<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hiv/stats/2023/index.html#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20there%20were%20324,Outbreak%20Response%20and%20Case%20Counts.>