



April 27, 2023

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Senator John Hoffman
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2111
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Mohamud Noor
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
379 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Hoffman & Representative Noor:

Our union represents 50,000 workers in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and self-directed home care. Across the spectrum of long-term care and healthcare, staffing shortages are crippling our systems. Staffing shortages are the common element in stories that range from homecare clients who have died because they cannot get care to hospital patients who cannot be discharged to a nursing home. We encourage the SF2934 Conference Committee to invest in workers across the full breadth of care.

First, and most importantly, both the House and the Senate fund and ratify the recent contract agreement and related MOUs for SEIU homecare workers. The contract increases the minimum wage from \$15.25 per hour to \$20 per hour over two years, provides a \$1000 retention bonus to those who have worked at least 6 months, and creates a wage scale for experienced workers with stepped increases up to \$22.50 per hour. Because these provisions will allow home care jobs to compete with jobs in other industries, we hope to attract large numbers of new workers. Please note that the rate increase also covers the Traditional PCA program, even though those workers are private sector employees of an agency and are not covered by the terms of our contract. We encourage you to adopt the House funding levels of \$341.6 million in FY24-25 and \$547.9 million in FY26-27, which are larger than the Governor and the Senate positions.

Second, there are two crucial provisions to address the nursing home staffing shortage. Both bodies have positions for additional nursing home funding beyond current VBR rates. We encourage you to adopt the Senate funding level of \$74 million over FY24-25 and FY26-27, although it might be better to concentrate the money in the first biennium. We suggest that the money be used to fund a uniform statewide system of retention bonuses. When combined with the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board, which passed both bodies earlier as part of SF3035, the Jobs/Labor Omnibus Budget bills, this investment will help attract and retain more workers. Both bodies also provide one-time funding for the Governor's Long-Term Care Workforce Grants for New Americans. While we would prefer some form of

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ongoing funding, we encourage you to adopt the larger House position of \$40.8 million. Our members know that immigrants are a key source of LTC labor and often need additional support to stay in these very challenging jobs.

In addition, there are a number of smaller provisions that are important to our members. Our homecare workers appreciate that both bodies include a provision to allow PCAs to drive their clients on paid time, but they encourage you to add the Senate provisions to increase the number of hours parents/spouses can be paid to provide care in the CFSS and CDCS programs and to improve the Direct Support Connect service that was created through our first home care union contract. All of these provisions will allow workers and clients to operate more efficiently, which will help alleviate staffing problems. We encourage you to adopt the House position to phase out the sub-minimum wage. It reflects our fundamental labor value that all workers deserve this basic protection. Our members at Rainbow Health encourage you to adopt the House position which doubles the Governor's budget request for HIV funding. The \$24.2 million in FY24 funding offsets reduced Federal funding and will maintain these essential health programs. Our members at Bay View nursing home in Red Wing encourage you to adopt the Senate position for a facility rate increase that treats them like other providers with a similar service model. Finally, our members at Axis Minnesota encourage you to adopt the Senate position to invest \$25 million in both bienniums to increase rates for ICF/DD facilities. In the past, these facilities have too often been overlooked.

While the staffing crisis is enormous, so is the opportunity to rectify the long-standing underinvestment in this workforce, which is disproportionately made up of women and people of color. We are overjoyed that the Governor, House, and Senate all put forward proposals that meet this historic moment. We look forward to working with you on a final bill that will combine the best ideas of all three.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Gulley', written in a cursive style.

Jamie Gulley