



April 28, 2023

Dear Legislative Leadership and Health and Human Services Conference Committee Members:

We are Minnesota faith leaders from different faith traditions writing with shared values and a shared concern. Week after week, we teach compassion. We teach concern for the poorest and most vulnerable among us. We work for a just society that treats every one of us with the worth and dignity we all deserve.

We believe Minnesota is at its best when we are rooted in these broadly shared values. Minnesota is better as a state when we care for one another, when we include rather than exclude, and when we refuse to leave our neighbors behind.

This legislative session we urge Minnesota lawmakers to right a moral wrong by allowing our immigrant neighbors without documented status to access MinnesotaCare. No matter what we look like, or how long we have lived in our state, everyone needs and deserves access to high quality, affordable health insurance. The estimated 81,000 immigrants without citizenship status across the state of Minnesota deserve access to health care too. Many of our undocumented neighbors have lived in our communities for 10, 15, 20, or more years, longer than many of us who call Minnesota home. Our communities and local economies depend on them. They should be able to depend on the same life saving programs as the rest of us.

MinnesotaCare is a lifeline to Minnesotans who qualify. It provides high quality insurance with low deductibles, premiums, and co-pays to those who earn under 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines, about \$27,000 for a single person and \$56,000 for a family of four. It allows households with lower incomes to access and make the most of preventative care. Preventive care is critically important, detecting serious illnesses, like cancer, before it is too late to treat. We also know that preventive care is the most cost effective care for patients. Our undocumented neighbors also deserve the health and financial benefits that come from being able to consistently access preventive care.

Many of our undocumented neighbors provided for us and cared for our state during the pandemic. Minnesotans without status largely work jobs in essential sectors that an aging and more educated U.S. workforce is unable to fill. This is especially important in Greater Minnesota, which has an older population than the Twin Cities. According to Census Bureau Data, 69% of undocumented immigrants work in front-line jobs considered "essential" during COVID-19, including agriculture, meat packing, grocery, caregiving, janitorial and cleaning services, security, and construction. This higher risk led to

higher rates of illness and death too. Members of the Latino community died at twice the age-adjusted rate from COVID-19 than white Minnesotans and their ICU admittance for COVID-19 was at four-times the age-adjusted rate.

Our neighbors without citizenship status, also pay federal, state, and local taxes. Many have helped fund the services we depend on for decades. They pay their share of taxes, and it is only fair and just, that undocumented Minnesotans be given access to MinnesotaCare.

For Jews, Christians, and Muslims, offering care to newcomers and welcome to strangers is central to our sacred texts. We are reminded to remember the times when our ancestors were immigrants. This teaching should bring to mind the stories of our own families. We have been included and have found a home. It is time to more fully include current immigrants in the Minnesota community.

We can do that by allowing our undocumented neighbors to access MinnesotaCare. We will all be better for it.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Marcia A. Zimmerman, Temple Israel

Imam Asad Zaman, Muslim American Society of Minnesota

Bishop Ann Svennungsen, Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ