



May 3, 2023

Re: SF2995

Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments on SF2995. The Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) is made up of over 4,000 health and human service professionals statewide. Our members cover the health and human service (HHS) spectrum—mental health providers, social workers, case managers, etc.—and are employed by for-profit and nonprofit entities, as well as state and local government agencies.

While measures to ensure health and human services provider safety have been included in the House version of SF2995 (Article 3 Sec. 200 line 290.17), they have not been included in the Senate companion. **MSSA and the undersigned organizations urge you to include measures to ensure the safety of human service providers in your final agreement and to add a provision to ensure 50 percent of funding will go to human service providers.** This will help address a critical component of HHS provider burnout and the workforce shortage by providing human services agencies with the resources they need to ensure the safety of their employees.

This provision would also authorize the Minnesota Department of Health to award grants to HHS organizations to invest in workplace safety measures. Grants would be used, at an agency's discretion, to pay for safety equipment; systems to track, monitor, and prevent violence; training; support; and follow-up services. The grant will also help collect data to determine meaningful future policy changes.

Among human services professionals, workplace safety needs have never been greater. HHS providers are more likely to experience workplace safety incidents than those in other fields. HHS providers experience over 70% of all reported workplace safety incidents, but as many as 85% may not be reported. Workplace safety incidents have dramatically increased over the last decade and during the pandemic, and are a contributing factor to burnout. Professionals who have experienced safety incidents often report that unsafe situations are normalized in human services settings and accepted as a part of the profession.

In human services, this grant money will go a long way and have a lasting impact. A grant of \$5,000 can pay for a “train-the-trainer” safety program which provides a human services provider with safety training they can bring back to their agency and use to train other staff in

techniques such as crisis prevention and de-escalation. A grant of \$50,000 can pay for an entire security system for one shelter site, which helps ensure staff and residents remain safe by preventing safety incidents.

Importantly, this bill includes important safeguards to ensure client rights and protections. It does not include penalties or criminal charges against any client, patient, agency, or provider, and does not enforce or endorse new safety measures that are not already in use.

We are incredibly grateful for the inclusion of this funding in the House bill and hope to see it in the final joint agreement between the House and Senate. Thank you again for the opportunity to share our support on behalf of our organizations and the clients we serve. Please reach out to us with questions, comments, or concerns at msancartier@mnssa.org.

Sincerely,

Agate Housing and Services
Aitkin County Health and Human Services
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
Ampersand Families
Beacon Specialized Living MN
BeechWood, Inc.
Bemidji State University- Social Work Department
Bellis
Bestview Care Options
Carlton County Public Health & Human Services
Carver County Health and Human Services
Catholic Charities Twin Cities
Center for Rural Behavioral Health at Minnesota State University, Mankato
Family Pathways
Guild Services
Haven Housing
Heartland Girls' Ranch
Isanti County Health and Human Services
Kanabec County Family Services
Lac qui Parle County Family Services
Laura Baker Services Association
McLeod County Health & Human Services
Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health
Minnesota Children's Alliance
Minnesota Social Service Association
Model Cities of St. Paul Inc.
Morrison County Health and Human Services
Nobles County Community Services

North Homes Children and Family Services
Northeast Youth and Family Services
Oak Tree Support Services
POR Emotional Wellness
Reach for Resources, Inc.
Renville County Human Services
Social Work Department, Metro State University
SpringPath Mental Health
St. Catherine University-Department of Social Work
The Salvation Army Northern Division
Thomas Allen
Thrive Behavioral Network LLC
Valley Outreach
Village Ranch Inc.
Wellcome Manor Family Services
Wright County Health & Human Services
Yellow Medicine County Family Service Center