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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](mailto: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