



April 8, 2022

**To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee**  
**RE: House File 4579**

Dear Chair Schultz and Committee Members,

The Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) and the Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) are statewide projects of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. MDLC serves as the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) organization for Minnesota, and, along with every other state and territory, is the largest network of legally based advocacy services for people with disabilities in the United States. MDLC provides free legal services to children and adults with disabilities. LSAP is the advocacy arm of Legal Aid and has provided legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of Legal Aid's clients and all low-income Minnesotans since 1977.

Your commitment to the people of Minnesota and to making Minnesota's human services programs more accessible and equitable is evident in the many proposals and investments in HF 4579. This bill contains many provisions that would greatly benefit our clients, including:

- **A set of proposals to support people to live in their own homes** (HF 2925), including equitable service termination appeal rights, expanded shared services, and support coordination training (Article 2, Sections 1, 3, 14, 15, 21, 39, 40; Article 15, Section 2, Subdivision 20, paragraph (c)). Each of these provisions would remove barriers to choosing to live in their own homes, which is more essential amidst this workforce shortage than ever.
- **Allowing PCAs to bill for time spent driving their clients** (Article 2, Sections 8-11). It is often very helpful for our clients to be able to be driven to work, run errands, or elsewhere by their PCA, and this provision would allow driving time to be billable, without having to wait for the implementation of CFSS.
- **PCA/CFSS Rate Framework Increase** (Article 2, Section 18). Our PCA program is fundamental to people receiving the supports they need to live in their own homes and communities, but wages remain far too low, especially amidst the workforce shortage. Increasing the implementation factor is a smart way to make an ongoing, permanent increase in the PCA rate framework.
- **Lifting the 40-hour cap for paid parents and spouses in PCA/CFSS** (Article 2, Sections 12, 16-17). Many families have ended up providing more care themselves for family members who need PCA support, but the current 40-hour cap has limited what they can be paid for providing these important supports. This would give families more flexibility to meet support needs.

- **Disability Services Accessibility Task Force and Pilot Projects** (Article 2, Section 38). People who use disability services often find that the process of accessing these services itself is challenging and poses accessibility barriers. This task force would bring together stakeholders to identify accessibility barriers and propose solutions, while also introducing pilot projects aimed at reducing appeals and improving communication.
- **Employment Exploration Rate Increase** (Article 2, Section 21). Employment Exploration services are an important step on the path to competitive, integrated employment particularly for people who have worked in sheltered workshops without really considering competitive, integrated employment. More funding would help providers have more or better trained staff to assist people to consider competitive, integrated employment.
- **Stabilizing working Minnesotans through aligning MFIP and General Assistance benefits with SNAP six-month reporting and budgeting** (Article 9, sections 1-3, 5, 11-13, 16-23, 25-27, 30-39). This change affords parents more predictability in budgeting their monthly earnings from work and eliminates unnecessary paperwork requirements.
- **Increasing General Assistance benefits** (Article 9, section 6). The General Assistance benefit of \$203 per month for single adults has not increased since 1986. Legal Aid supports both a modest increase in benefits and an annual cost of living adjustment.
- **Increasing the gross income limit for SNAP to 200% of the federal poverty guideline** (Article 9, section 4). This change allows more Minnesotans to access federal food benefits and addresses food insecurity statewide.
- **Aligning RSDI and SSI income disregards for MFIP** (Article 9, section 28). This provision aligns how the State calculates income in MFIP and CCAP for parents with disabilities. The change is narrowly targeted to low-income parents who are accessing federal RSDI-disability benefits but are still struggling to make ends meet.

We also support many of the child care assistance provisions that are anticipated to be added to the House Health and Human Services package.

Thank you so much for your leadership and for advancing these proposals. We are grateful for your work and look forward to continuing to support these important provisions.



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