

March 20, 2023

Re: Letter of Support for HF2087

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

My name is Robyn Churchill. I live in Senate District 50 with my husband and three children. My youngest son has complex medical needs combined with a developmental disability that requires the need for skilled nursing in our home. On behalf of our family and the hundreds of other families across the state of Minnesota that rely on home care nursing, I'm asking for your support of HF2087 to increase home care nursing reimbursement rates by 55%. Home care nurses are significantly underpaid relative to their peers as they rely largely on Medical Assistance reimbursement rates for funding. Chronically low reimbursement rates make it impossible for nursing agencies to provide the competitive wages and benefits that are required to hire and retain nurses.

Prior to nursing support in our home, my son had frequent hospital stays Childrens MN. Our nursing agency and the incredible nurses who have cared for our son are critical to the support system that allows our son to thrive at home. Home care nurses provide frequent assessment and early care interventions to manage his needs and to avoid costly ambulance rides, ER visits and hospital stays. We have also shortened stays in the hospital post surgeries due to our ability to manage his needs at home because of nursing. One overnight stay in the hospital is roughly the equivalent cost to over two weeks of in-home nursing. Nursing saves our healthcare system dollars.

Staffing shortages put him at an increased and costly risk of going to the hospital when care is not provided to the level needed at home. These critical shortages result in unfilled shifts. Our agency alone has approximately 50% of their shifts unfilled per week.

The inability to hire and retain staff has impacted our family in several ways. We have experienced high nursing turnover with over a dozen nurses involved in my son's care. The majority of these nurses have left home care nursing in favor of hospital or clinic jobs that pay higher wages. Currently we have one primary nurse and if she is out sick, on vacation or if she resigned, we would be left with no nursing as there isn't slack in the system to accommodate coverage without hiring new nurses which could take months.

It is imperative to serve this population of children at home and your support of HF2087 will have a significant impact on this critical issue. The Minnesota Olmstead Plan provides a set of goals so people with disabilities can live, learn, work, and enjoy life alongside everyone else in the community. Our children have the right to stay in their homes, and not live in hospitals. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Kind regards,
Robyn Churchill