

February 2, 2023

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee

Re: Support for HF 999



Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

Founded by parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in 1946, The Arc Minnesota is a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization that promotes and protects the human rights of individuals with IDD, supporting them and their families in a lifetime of full inclusion and participation in their communities. We are a chapter of The Arc of the United States, the largest national community-based organization advocating for people with IDD and their families.

The Arc Minnesota strongly supports HF 999 authored by Rep. Hanson which would make much needed changes to the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS). We need to address the direct care workforce shortage from all angles, which includes rate increases so that we can better retain the staff we have. Increasing the Competitive Workforce Factor (CWF) and changing the date of the data used for other component value adjustments will ensure we are funding rate increases that are more impactful and meet the needs of right now. These critical investments will go directly to the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

We must work to ensure people with disabilities can maintain the supports and services they need to be safe and healthy while also remaining in the homes they choose, in their communities. Many DWRS services are critical to supporting people to live in their own homes, however, the direct care staffing shortage has made this increasingly difficult for Minnesotans with disabilities. With this change, we can start to address one part of the problem—the low wages for DSPs.

Additionally, the bill would increase the rate for the Employment Exploration service. In 2018, our investment in services that support competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities was ten times lower than what we invested in sheltered workshops.¹ Services like Employment Exploration support people with disabilities in finding employment in the community that matches their interests and skillsets. Increasing the rate for this service will make it more accessible to people who need it.

Thank you to Rep. Hanson for bringing this bill forward and thank you committee members for the opportunity to provide input on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Julia Page
Public Policy Director

¹ Ending the Subminimum Wage in Minnesota. https://mylegalaid.org/uploads/Ending-the-Subminium-Wage-in-Minnesota_October-2022-sm.pdf