

February 14, 2023

Re: HF 696



Dear Chair Noor and Human Services Finance 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.

One of the factors contributing to the direct care workforce shortage is low wages. Most direct support workers are not paid a wage that covers their living expenses, especially for those who have families. The “Direct Care Workers” report shows that median annual earnings are just 20,200 dollars. 44 percent of direct support workers live in low-income households, and 45 percent rely on some form of public assistance such as Medicaid, nutrition assistance, or cash assistance.¹ Additionally, many people do this work without access to health insurance, worker’s compensation, paid family leave, and child care. These harmful practices both reflect and perpetuate the racial and gender inequalities faced by direct support workers, who are largely women, People of Color, and immigrants.

The Arc Minnesota strongly supports HF 696 which updates the cost components and adds inflationary adjustments to the PCA Framework passed in 2021. We also urge you to fully fund the framework. The lack of PCAs leads to burnout of the workers and lower quality care for people with disabilities who access these services and supports. Low reimbursement rates and inadequate wages create instability for providers and force dedicated PCAs out of the field. Disabled people lose their trusted, high-quality support professionals, and many have had to move into more restrictive congregate settings. Some people have even lost their lives.

People with disabilities deserve to live in their own homes with consistent, stable, high-quality support staff. People in these professions deserve to be valued for their important work. Increasing and stabilizing rates for critical in-home services will help ensure we retain these dedicated workers by paying them livable wages to sustain a life for themselves and their families. They must also have benefits that help them stay healthy and well, and support work-life balance.

The Arc Minnesota encourages the committee to pass and fully fund HF 696 to help ensure people with disabilities can remain in their homes, in the community. Thank you, Rep. Frederick, for bringing this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Julia Page
Public Policy Director

¹ Direct Care Workers in the United States Key Facts. (2021, September 7). PHI.
<http://www.phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts-2/>