January 31, 2023

**Chair Noor and Members of the Human Service Finance Committee,**

This letter is sent to support the Best Life Alliance legislation which makes long-term sustainable investments in the DWRS rates. Without these investments to address the workforce crisis, the crumbling we are seeing in community disability services now will soon lead to a collapse of the system.

Accord supports people with disabilities and people with mental illness in the Twin Cities and throughout Minnesota. We consistently have 30-40 waiver related positions open at any given time on a base fully staffed employee count of just under 200.

These consistently open position not only limit the amount of support and services Accord can provide, they have created an ongoing level of stress for all employees at Accord that is unhealthy and unsustainable. These employees have been asked to take on a rising workload with no foreseeable end in sight, causing the loss of experienced and valuable employees who choose to find other employment rather than work under these circumstances.

Imagine being an employee who has to take on additional “temporary” workloads, only to realize that the “temporary” additional workload does not end, or they only experience brief respites from shouldering that additional workload. They are faced with some very unsatisfactory choices in the struggle to find or attempt to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

The circumstances described above are happening every day in all programs within Accord. The people we serve, who depend on the care and support of our employees, are living with the daily stress they see in those providing support, and the relatively constant turnover in those employees. Accord could easily support and serve 500-600 additional individuals if we could achieve and maintain those consistently open positions.

Without additional investments in DWRS, disability services providers, like Accord, will continue to contract. The impacts of this happening will cost much more than the needed investment. The legislature’s failure to pass funding last year has led to the system weakening a great deal. The problem cannot be ignored without very serious implications for people with disabilities. Please act on this legislation.

Regards,

Paul Welna

Chief Human Capital Officer