



February 18, 2021

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
RE: House File 976

Dear Chair Schultz and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support of House File 976. This bill includes immediate and long-term solutions that prioritize person-centered service delivery, promote social connectedness, and enhance the quality of life for our neighbors.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees and 10,000 volunteers serving 1 in 65 Minnesotans every year. This includes home and community-based services (HCBS) that are innovative and person-centered to people with disabilities. LSS' wide array of services are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of individuals in a variety of settings and to support them to live the life they imagine for themselves.

LSS strongly supports two provisions within House File 976:

1. **An extension of remote supports for certain waiver services under the peacetime emergency to June 2022.** This extension is critical to maintaining continuity of care and community support. Remote supports provide an opportunity to innovate service delivery through alternative models, including telephone, email and video chat, which significantly reduce isolation while improving social and emotional connection. As the threat of COVID-19 decreases, we believe that remote supports will be a critical addition to in-person services and will not supersede, but will complement, hands-on, in-person support that many program participants need and desire.
2. **Directing the Commissioner of Human Services to work with stakeholders to create a plan to ensure Minnesotans with disabilities have access to individualized direct support while in the hospital.** We are thankful for recent federal policy that allows states to authorize this as a Medicaid service. Many HCBS providers already provide this support without reimbursement which is unsustainable. Creating a reimbursement pathway will protect this essential support, improve collaboration between individuals receiving care and their providers, and help people receive person-centered, continuous, and culturally-response care.

We are thankful to Representative Acomb for her leadership on this bill and to ARRM for advancing this important issue. As you continue to work toward solutions to help our neighbors achieve stability and health, please know LSS remains committed to be a trustworthy and innovate partner. LSS will stand side by side neighbors, living out our mission and never losing sight of our vision that all people have the opportunity to live and work in community with full and abundant lives.



If we can be of service or support on these issues, please do not hesitate to reach out to us or our Senior Director of Advocacy, Erin Sutton, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeri Schoonover".

Jeri Schoonover
Chief Service Officer
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Thueson".

Patrick Thueson
Chief Executive Officer
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota