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To Whom it May Concern on the House Human Services Policy Committee,

I am writing as the executive director of the Pine River Group Home, Inc. We are a not-for profit agency. I have worked for this agency for over 31 years. We provide a wide range of home and community-based services in Cass and Crow Wing Counties in Minnesota. We have 9 licensed group home locations plus non-residential supports, such as Individualized Home Supports. Our service area covers a large geographic area in rural, central Minnesota. The persons served by our agency all have cognitive challenges and/or disabilities and depend on their staff for a wide variety of support and services, including transportation and community inclusion. They depend on paid services to get to all the places they need and want to go including but not limited to: medical appointments, grocery shopping, work, pharmacy, barber/beauty shop, bank, church, library, personal needs shopping, to visit family and friends, and social/recreational activities.

We do lots of things for persons supported by our agency that is not billable time, because it is indirect time. For example, I have had multiple calls to insurance companies, care coordinators, medical providers, and pharmacies this year due to changes in coverage for persons served by our agency. This is usually due to providers no longer in network, and medications no longer on the formulary. This is not billable time. We have had several clients become victims of hacking of their debit cards/bank accounts in the past year. Working with the bank and debit card companies to review account activity, dispute the charges, close the accounts, open new accounts, is time consuming. This is not billable time. Our staff do a crazy variety of things to support persons with disabilities as indirect, unbillable time! Their day might include, calling someone to find out why the snowplow or garbage truck did not come, why the prescription is not able to be filled, why their "free government phone" phone stopped working, why the EBT card is not working, why they received a closing notice for their MA even though you assisted with the renewal and know it was submitted complete and on time, and an endless list of similar tasks. Most of this is unbillable time. We arrange for appliance repairs, schedule appointments, mediate with landlords and employers, and keep families, case managers and guardians informed of changes in status. This is stuff that is so important to living the lives they choose, as independently as possible, as valued, integrated members of their communities. But we are not able to be paid for any of this time, while our staff are on the clock.

As an agency, we also provide transportation for our non-residential clients by reimbursing their staff, using their personal vehicles, at the IRS mileage rate. Additionally, we are expected to reimburse the staff for any expenses incurred while supporting person during this community inclusion. For example, if they attend the high school band concert, there is an admission fee. If they go to a play at the local community theatre, staff must purchase a ticket. If they go out to eat after a medical appointment, staff meal is reimbursed. If this service is provided under the Individualized Home Support 15-minute unit service, the current reimbursement rate for the Client Programming and Supports component, which includes costs to provide access to the community, is .54 per 15-minute unit, which is \$2.16 an hour. If the staff works for 4 hours, the total reimbursement rate for client supports is \$8.64.

Here is an example to illustrate the financial strain. We have a client who participates in a therapeutic horseback riding program. This is a form of physical and occupational therapy that uses horses and horseback riding for improvement of their mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. She benefits in many ways. She has improved or maintained balance, coordination, range of motion, circulation, and core muscle strength through horseback riding. Socially she has bonded with her horse and trainer. She has developed patience and improved emotional control- she knows that if she is impatient or in a bad mood, her horse can sense that. This program also provides companionship for the rider. All of the people we support have unique situations or life experiences due to their disabilities. This can lead to loneliness and isolation. This time with her staff, along with fellow riders, instructors, and horses provide companionship that instrumental to good emotional health. Her staff must drive her 32 miles, each way, to have this specialized therapy. The mileage reimbursement I pay the staff is \$42.88 (64 miles x IRS reimbursement rate of .67/mile). \$42.88 (paid out) – \$8.64 (what I got paid, above) = **-\$34.24** loss to the agency. She participates in this program up to several times per month, compounding the loss. This formula is broken!

We have made the difficult business decision that we can only take her to horses twice per month to reduce our losses in providing this service. Additionally, I have tried to apply for rate exceptions for transportation and have had them denied because ‘transportation is included in the rate.’

I know this is not a budget year and this is not the year to fix the DWRS formula. BUT...If we could bill for **all** the other things we do for clients that are indirect or unbillable time, especially our Individualized Home Support services, that could offset some of these sorts of losses.

Please allow us and other providers to bill for ALL the supports and services we provide for the people we love and support, as described in HF3835. This will make us whole as a business.

Sincerely,

Carrie Guida  
Executive Director