



March 29, 2023

To: Members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee

RE: HF238 – Children and Families Omnibus

Dear Chair Pinto and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's comments on HF238 – the Children and Families Omnibus bill. LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees who serve one in 65 Minnesotans every year. We are committed to innovative, person-centered service delivery that promotes resilience and long-term stability for people in all stages of life.

Thank you for the strong focus on increased investment in services that strengthen prevention, early intervention, and family preservation. We also greatly appreciate the emphasis on a continuum of services for youth that will improve access to service, build community connection, and remove barriers to health and well-being.

LSS strongly supports:

- **Kinship Caregiver Support.** Thank you for the inclusion of investment in informal kinship caregiver grants. This is critical to helping more families identify services and supports to meet the needs of the children they are raising as well as their own needs. This will enhance the safety and stability of these family arrangements and support prevention of the need for child welfare involvement.
- **Homeless Youth Act.** Thank you for the increased investments in supporting youth statewide. Unfortunately, due to several factors, Minnesota youth who are homeless on their own has continued to increase, and the need is much greater than currently available resources. The additional funding in HF238 will support providers to strengthen programs that have demonstrated success and merit further investment
- **Safe Harbor.** Thank you for the additional investment in Safe Harbor programs which will increase prevention of sexual exploitation while helping more youth feel a sense of belonging and have opportunities to confront and cope with past traumas.

Please consider the following recommendations:

- **Prepared Meals.** We hope you will consider the addition of provisions in HF2225 (Fischer) which establishes funding for prepared meals statewide to Minnesotans facing



food insecurity and who lack the home, health, or ability to cook for themselves. Meals would be targeted to our neighbors not eligible for other federally funded meal programs and tailored to the cultural and dietary needs of the people served.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration on these issues. Please contact me at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information.

Sincerely,

Erin Sutton, MSW, LGSW
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