



## HENNEPIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

A-2400 GOVERNMENT CENTER  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55487-0240

May 10, 2022

Representative Tina Liebling, Chair  
Representative Jennifer Schultz  
Representative Aisha Gomez  
Representative Dave Pinto  
Representative Tony Albright

Senator Jim Abeler, Chair  
Senator Paul Utke  
Senator Mark Koran  
Senator Michelle Benson  
Senator John Hoffman

### **Re: SF4410 (HHS Omnibus) and Hennepin Priorities**

Chair Liebling, Chair Abeler and Members of the HHS Conference Committee:

Thank you for your dedication to ensuring all Minnesotans can rely on a strong and accessible social safety net. We are your partners in helping people have the support they need to thrive.

COVID proved that the safety net we provide is needed now more than ever. So, as you meet to negotiate a supplemental Health and Human Services (HHS) omnibus bill, we would like to share our priority needs across the services spectrum.

#### **Early Childhood Education**

We strongly support fully funding the proposed reprioritization of the Basic Sliding Fee childcare assistance program. This is a major step in making the temporary changes the legislature authorized last year permanent. It is one of the most meaningful investments you can make to ensure all working families have access to quality childcare. This is a jobs program, an education program, and a social safety net program.

We urge you to increase investment in the Home Visiting program, including funding levels contained in HF3885/HF4326. Home Visiting is a critical tool we have to ensure that vulnerable newborns and their mothers/caregivers have the healthy start they need to flourish later in life.

#### **Reduce Red Tape**

We encourage you to include the Cash Simplification provisions included in HF 4124. Current requirements place undue burdens on counties, forcing us to invest in overly bureaucratic methods that fail to strengthen program integrity. We ask that you support reforms that benefit residents and county systems while also ensuring that there are no compromises to program integrity.

## **Housing Supports**

We encourage you to include Housing Support reform proposed by the House (Article 18, Sec. 4). Housing Support is a crucial program that helps move Minnesotans living with disabilities out of homelessness and into stable housing. Unfortunately, financial penalties built into this system require people who receive SSI, RSDI or federal veteran's benefits to pay upwards of 90% of their monthly benefits toward their housing costs. It forces people to choose between paying their monthly Housing Support payment or other necessary expenses, such as transportation, a phone, or even child support. The House position would dramatically reduce the program penalty, move people out of shelters, and provide for their self-sufficiency.

## **Health Care Programs**

Key provisions under consideration by the conference committee impact our award-winning state-licensed and county owned/operated managed care plan, Hennepin Health. This program administers Minnesota Healthcare Programs for economically fragile county residents. We have concerns with what Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) impact provisions would have on our plan, our network of providers, and our collective ability to meet the needs of our enrollees. Having lost capacity to rideshare companies and the dramatic increase in fuel costs and inflation, the lower reimbursement rates proposed in the omnibus bill are concerning.

We urge you to include provisions around rate adjustments contained in SF 2999, which we believe will preserve long-term capacity among providers. Provisions mandating opt-out protocols for managed care enrollees pose great risk to Hennepin Health. Unlike other managed care plans administering public programs, our enrollees experience a high level of economic fragility and unstable housing. Our program model is designed around these individuals, and the proposal harms our ability to consistently meet their needs.

## **Mental Health**

We strongly support expanded investment in the Children's Mental Health program, including the proposed \$2.4 million. We urge you to include provisions from HF3439/SF3136 that would address cost shifts to counties from persons receiving treatment at the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center. We continue to object to the lack of control over care provided to people we do not oversee; and to inadequate transition planning when persons no longer need the hospital level of care for their mental health needs. We urge you to include reforms and additional funding to the Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI) program, as this is one of the chief sources of county-state revenue for our systems of community-based care.

With our state's record surplus, we hope to work collaboratively with you to ensure we make systems of prevention, treatment, and care sustainable and accessible over the long term.

Sincerely,



Marion Greene  
Chair, Board of Commissioners