



March 28, 2022

The Honorable Tina Liebling, Chair
Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representative
477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Joe Schomacker, GOP Lead
Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representative
209 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable John Huot, Vice Chair
Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representative
583 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF 4576; HF 4398

Dear Chair Liebling, Vice Chair Huot, Lead Schomacker, and Committee Members:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) want to respectfully share our views on House File 4576 and House File 4398. For the past 44 years, LSAP has provided legislative and administrative policy advocacy as a statewide division of Legal Aid. Legal Aid provides free civil legal services across the state for low-income clients, elder Minnesotans, and Minnesotans with disabilities. MDLC serves as the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) organization for Minnesota, one of 49 other state P&A's federally designed under a Congressional act. MDLC provides free legal services to children and adults with disabilities in Minnesota. LSAP is the advocacy arm of Legal Aid and has provided legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of Legal Aid's clients and all low-income Minnesotans since 1977.

We write to share our views on House File 4576 and House File 4398. There are many provisions in these bills that will benefit our clients.

House File 4576 includes:

Continuous Medicaid Eligibility for Children

We are very supportive of the provision in Article 2, Section 3, which would establish 12 month continuous eligibility for Medicaid for children up to age 21. Continuous coverage for 12 months is so important for health outcomes, as it encourages getting regular check-ups, provides coverage for ongoing conditions, and establishes consistency for families. We believe 12 month continuous eligibility is also important for adults, and would encourage the committee to consider adopting the approach in House File 4157.

Covid federal public health emergency Medicaid unwinding provisions

The federal public health emergency in response to Covid-19 has provided continuous Medicaid coverage for many Minnesotans. When the time comes for this public health emergency and the continuous Medicaid coverage to end, there will be many challenges for people as far as navigating current eligibility, and the massive administrative undertaking for agencies in handling reenrollments. Several provisions in this bill would ease those burdens, including:

- Short-term asset limit disregard following the end of the public health emergency (Article 2, Section 2)

- Preserving health care coverage for Medicaid and MinnesotaCare as needed to comply with federal guidance and until the enrollee's first renewal following the resumption of renewals after the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (Article 2, Section 12)
- Twelve month data matching, premium collection at reenrollment, and other flexibilities (Article 2, Section 13)

MinnesotaCare coverage for undocumented youth

Legal Aid supports ensuring that young people who are undocumented have access to health care through MinnesotaCare (Article 2, Section 9). Young people benefit from regular doctor's appointments, mental health supports, and other needed care. This provision will help improve health outcomes and reduce uncompensated care.

MinnesotaCare Buy-In

Legal Aid supports expanding access to health care for lower-income Minnesotans by permitting eligible Minnesotans to buy in to MinnesotaCare (Article 3). This will provide significant help to Legal Aid's clients and all low-income Minnesotans in obtaining and affording essential health care and would reduce uncompensated care for providers and minimize the need for significantly more expensive emergency care for those without health insurance or the many insured who delay care due to high deductibles. Many of our clients have seasonal or other jobs that result in fluctuating income; this option will help them retain access to needed health coverage and will promote healthy equity and outcomes.

MinnesotaCare Premiums

Legal Aid supports the important provision to maintain premiums for the current MinnesotaCare program at levels outlined in the American Rescue Plan Act (Article 3, Sections 5 and 6(c)). Increases in premiums can be a significant barrier to low income people obtaining and maintaining coverage.

Navigator grants

Legal Aid's navigators play a critical role in the application and enrollment process for public programs. Our clients struggle with the complexity of the application, renewals, Limited English Proficiency, and technology issues. With the Public Health Emergency ending sometime in 2022 Legal Aid supports the Governor's proposal (Article 5, Section 2, Subdivision 19b) to grant funds to navigator organizations to be prepared for the unwinding of the public health emergency and the record renewals that will occur.

House File 4398 includes:

Reducing Health Disparities for People with Disabilities

People who have disabilities face significant disparities in access to health care and health outcomes. Covid-19 put this on display and, in many cases, exacerbated this. We are very supportive of the measures in House File 3498 to establish grants, data tracking, and technical assistance to support the Department of Health to collaborate with partners to address equity barriers to health care and preventative services for chronic diseases among people with disabilities.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all Minnesotans and for considering this important step to advance health equity.

Sincerely,



Maren Hulden
Staff Attorney