



May 7, 2021

***Sent via Email**

The Honorable Representative Liebling
The Honorable Representative Schultz
The Honorable Representative Gomez
The Honorable Representative Pinto
The Honorable Representative Schomacker

The Honorable Senator Benson
The Honorable Senator Abeler
The Honorable Senator Utke
The Honorable Senator Koran
The Honorable Senator Hoffman

Re: Olmsted County Priorities in Health and Human Services Bill

Dear Chair Liebling, Chair Benson, and Members of the HHS Conference Committee:

For both state and county governments, the health and human services budget areas makes up a very large portion of the overall budget. It is imperative for the state and counties to work together to find budget solutions that meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable people and ensure the future effectiveness and sustainability of health and human services programs. Thank you for your hard work to develop House and Senate positions for the omnibus health and human services bill ([HF 2128](#)). As the end of session nears and final negotiations take place, we respectfully ask that you please consider the provisions outlined below that are important to Olmsted County and many counties across the state.

SUPPORT: Codifying health and human services waivers (House Article 7 & 14 and Senate Articles 8, 9, & 14)

Counties support codifying four waivers pertaining to targeted case management, long-term care assessments, MFIP enrollment, and housing support based on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of the four waivers are included in the Senate bill and all four are included in the House bill. Olmsted County is grateful to the chairs, committee members, and bill authors for their support of these issues. We respectfully urge the Senate to support the House language pertaining to the long-term care assessments, which is the provision that was not included in the Senate bill.

SUPPORT: Reprioritizing Child Care Assistance Basic Sliding Fee (House Article 9, Sections 1 & 2 and Article 21, Section 2)

The House bill includes policy language to reprioritize the waitlist for the Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) program and is funded with federal dollars designated for child care programs. This issue became a late priority for Olmsted County due to the high number of families on the BSF waitlist (currently more than 260). According to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, there were more than 127,000 job vacancies statewide in the 4th quarter of 2020 (up 14% from the 2nd quarter). Access to child care is an important component to filling these jobs. Reprioritizing the waiting list for the BSF program will allow more families to access child care and return to the workforce. We thank the House for including this provision in the bill and urge Senators to support this provision during conference committee deliberations.

SUPPORT: Repayment of county dollars

Olmsted County is grateful for the House position to hold counties harmless from state errors related to billing for substance use disorder treatment in institutions of mental disease (IMDs). These unanticipated costs have put a strain on county budgets. We greatly appreciate the funding the House bill includes to reimburse counties for these costs and urge the Senate to support this position.

SUPPORT: Short- and long-term COVID-19 response needs

Ongoing local public health pandemic response requires resources to support activities such as vaccine distribution and continued community outreach. Olmsted County appreciates the significant funding increases in the House and Senate HHS bills for the Local Public Health Grant but is concerned the Senate bill reduces SHIP grants to provide the increase (House Article 21, Section 3, Subd. 5 (e) & Senate Article 21, Section 3, Subd. 2 (f) & (g)).

Olmsted County has also seen an increased need for county human services programs, such as mental and behavioral health, housing stability, and economic assistance during the pandemic. We appreciate provisions to help address these needs such as funding increases for the Adult Mental Health Initiative grants. We thank the House and Senate HHS committees for including funding for this program (House & Senate Article 21, Section 2, Subd. 31).

To address housing stability, the House bill includes funding for the Emergency Services Program (House Article 21, Section 2, Subd. 24 (c)), and the Senate bill provides an increase for housing support services (Senate Article 14, Section 57). Olmsted County urges your support for all of these programs to help respond to increased client needs as we respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCERN: Child and teen check-ups (House Article 1, Section 34)

Olmsted County has concerns with the proposed change in the House bill that shifts approximately 50% of the outreach for the child and teen check-ups program to integrated health partnerships. Olmsted County public health staff have long-established relationships with our local providers and community partners, which we can utilize for local campaigns related to these outreach efforts. The county public health department is known and trusted by local communities and we are well positioned to provide the child and teen check-ups outreach activities. We respectfully urge you to reconsider this provision.

CONCERN: Waiver services cost share (Senate Article 14, Section 21)

Olmsted County is concerned about a new county cost share proposed in the Senate bill for individuals 18-27 years of age in residential support services, community residential services, corporate foster care, and customized living settings. We share the goal of placing and serving individuals in the most appropriate, productive settings, but do not believe this cost shift will accomplish that goal. The proposed shift will be significant for Olmsted County and would likely have to be absorbed through a property tax levy increase. We respectfully ask you to reconsider this approach.

Olmsted County is very grateful for your hard work this legislative session and for your commitment to serving our state. Thank you for your consideration of our positions on these health and human services issues and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:



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Stephanie Podulke, Chair

Olmsted County Board of Commissioners

Podulke.Stephanie@co.olmsted.mn.us

CC: Olmsted County Legislative Delegation

Senator Nelson
Senator Senjem
Representative Boldon
Representative Pierson
Representative Quam

5/10/21