

April 28, 2023

Re: Written testimony for HF2434

To: Members of the Ways and Means Committee

Dear Chairs Stephenson and Torkelson and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Robyn Churchill. I reside in House District 50A with my husband and three children. My youngest son Lewis has complex medical needs and a developmental disability which qualifies him for MA TEFRA. Lewis is happy, loving, funny and a great friend and brother. His needs are significant. Lewis requires home care nursing, multiple medical and therapy appointments weekly and 24/7 supervision. I am deeply concerned about certain provisions included in HF2434. This bill includes significant cuts to disability services and will have a lasting impact on the most vulnerable in our state.

Lewis is thriving due to the supports we are able to provide to him. He has benefited significantly from his access to secondary Medical Assistance insurance through MA TEFRA and recently he became eligible for a developmental delay waiver. When his needs became so great that I needed to leave my career of 17 years, I was able to do so knowing we would have the backstop of Medical Assistance as secondary insurance. Access to medical assistance has allowed Lewis to receive the necessary medical care he requires and in particular to allow him to continue to receive medically necessary access to home care nursing, a benefit previously covered by my prior employer's insurance, but not my husbands.

One provision of the bill in particular is of deep concern. I am writing in strong opposition to the reintroduction of TEFRA fees to access Medical Assistance. In 2023 when the legislature removed these fees, there was bipartisan, bicameral support. There were hearings on this in both the House and Senate and an incredible amount of parent advocacy related to this removal. At that time, Minnesota was one of only five states to charge this fee and tax on parents. Former DHS Commissioner Jodi Harpstead said at the time "This is great news for Minnesota families. It's a positive example of the state coming together to look out for the parents of people with disabilities." We cannot go backwards as a state in reintroducing these fees which are in effect a tax on parents of a child with a disability.

I recognize the tough spot that the legislature is in from a budget perspective this year but this reintroduction takes away important progress that was made just two years ago. This will have the effect of reducing access to necessary services. This would definitely be the case for our family as we weigh the situation moving forward. We waited over a year to get through the waiver process and are just beginning to set up a service plan for Lewis. I worry that we'll get this in place and with the reintroduction of the fee in January, our family will need to discontinue his waiver services, and potentially forego medical assistance as his secondary insurance. This would result in him losing his home care nursing.

Also, while it starts at a higher income level, there is evidence in prior legislation that these fees applied to many more families as the years went on. This is also set up as only hitting at a

certain income level which may have the unintended consequence of holding people back from pursuing other employment opportunities and promotions that result in them crossing the threshold to pay the fee.

Please reconsider the inclusion of this fee in the omnibus bill.

Kind regards,
Robyn Churchill