



Greater Twin Cities
United Way
gtcuw.org

March 29, 2022

Dear Members of the Minnesota House Health Finance and Policy Committee:

We write in support of House File 4615 to provide 12-month continuous Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility for children and youth 20 years of age or younger.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone. Together with our partners, we touched over 500,000 lives across the nine-county metro area last year. We fund over 100 nonprofits and coalitions through multi-year general operations grants, innovation initiatives and supportive funds directed toward our partners' most pressing needs in the areas of Household Stability, Educational Success and Economic Opportunity. As an important part of this work, we advocate for policies that support pathways toward economic independence for working families from low-wealth households.

High-demand industries such as retail, food service, low-wage health care and agriculture are experiencing acute labor shortages in our state, yet represent jobs that provide lower wages, inconsistent hours and work that is often temporary or seasonal. This can lead to dramatic variability in monthly income, making it difficult for families to "make ends meet".

Temporary benefits like MA can help fill those gaps between ends, by ensuring access to quality health care when times are tough. However, eligibility requirements for these programs often present barriers to economic independence by effectively penalizing people who take advantage of the employment opportunities available to them, creating a "benefits cliff." When a small, incremental income gain causes benefits to abruptly disappear, it can result in a net income loss to households and reduce access to medical care, child care, housing and food.

Continuous eligibility for youth has been adopted as a best practice by 23 states and would benefit nearly 16,000 Minnesota children each month.

We ask that you support House File 4615 to facilitate full participation in Minnesota's workforce and eliminate barriers for families working toward economic stability. This would also reduce health disparities by providing children access to healthcare, well-visits, vaccinations, and medical treatment.

We urge legislators to provide working families pathways toward fully engaging in our economy, particularly at this critical moment of recovery for our state.

Sincerely,

Kristen Rosenberger
Director, Advocacy & External Engagement
Greater Twin Cities United Way