

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Health Finance & Policy  
Chair – Rep. Liebling  
February 9, 2023

**Re: Supporting HF 816 one step closer to ending racial health disparities**

Dear Madam Chair and Members, my name is Idil Abdull; I am a Somali Autism Mom and pissed-off advocate.

Many thanks for the opportunity to testify in support of HF 816. As you all know, Minnesota has a horrible and shameful racial health disparities. This was shared with you by DHS' medical director, Dr. Nathan Chomilo who testified in this committee. This report stated 80% of people enrolled in public health programs are served by managed care organizations (MCOs).

I want to share with you a quote from this report: **“There has never been any period in American history where the health of blacks was equal to that of whites...Disparity is built into the system.”**- Evelynn Hammonds, historian of science at Harvard University.

You often hear the system is racist; there is institutional racism; the infrastructure is racist. Let's dissect this. This so-called system is made up of policies created, enhanced, and maintained by people. This bill moves one step closer to dismantling Minnesota's systemic racism. It will allow low-income people who are forced into MCOs the freedom, the opportunity, and the right to choose their health care. Isn't that what makes this country – **America**. Freedom is embedded into the American soul and fabric.

It is a must that low-income Minnesotans enjoy the same freedom to choose their health care as high income Minnesotans do.

Data from DHS tells us in 2020 **368** children with autism enrolled in MCOs are getting services vs **991** children with autism enrolled in fee for service for service (FFS). In 2021, **1773** children with FFS are getting autism therapy vs **696**. You see madam chair and members; this is what systemic racism is. Michael Smith with FFS Medicaid gets services and therapy while Michael Smith with MCO Medicaid does not. How can anyone think this is right.

The opponents of this bill will tell you MCOs save the state money. That is unequivocally false. For example, MCOs are paid at the beginning of the contract year the full amount for the number of patients enrolled. In other words, they are paid for services not rendered, and most likely will never be rendered. On the other hand, FFS is reimbursed after services have been rendered.

In summary, I hope you all support and vote for this incredibly important legislation for two main reasons.

1. It will decrease racial health disparities in Minnesota.
2. It will save the state money because services that actually occurred will be paid for.

Finally, I want to thank the author Rep. Hicks for having the courage to carry this and Rep. Liebling who has always been a champion for autism families.

Sincerely, Idil Abdull