

March 7, 2024

Members of the Human Services Finance Committee:

As members of the Nourish MN coalition, are pleased to offer our support for HF 3639 (Noor), a bill to direct the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services to submit an 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver for Health-Related Social Needs (HRSNs) to unlock federal funds to address social determinants of health.

We know that Minnesotans' health and wellbeing is often connected to their ability to afford basic needs like housing, healthcare, food, and transportation. That is why the Nourish MN coalition, which advocates for policies that would provide greater economic security for more Minnesotans, is supporting this legislation. With the costs of daily life rising and pandemic-era financial supports long expired, we believe the state should build on the investments from last year and continue the work of making life more affordable for our neighbors – especially when it unlocks federal dollars.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) defines HRSNs as, "...an individual's unmet, adverse conditions that contribute to poor health outcomes." By pursuing this federal waiver, we will be able to test Minnesota's need for expanded Medicaid coverage to include housing and nutrition interventions and case management services, better supporting our most underserved neighbors and improving health outcomes – which, as the federal government recognizes, will ultimately lower healthcare costs for them and for all Minnesotans.

As a coalition, we know that we are stronger when we work together. The same is true of the state and federal government. For Minnesotans lacking access to nutritious food or reliable housing whose physical and mental health suffers as a result, securing a federal waiver – and a 50% federal funding match – gives us the needed flexibility to support their nutrition, housing, and medical needs and a much clearer understanding of the most effective policy interventions.

Four other states have applied for this program. Oregon has utilized this program to include housing, climate and nutrition support for people in challenging situations such as homelessness, extreme weather events and leaving state or Tribal custody<sup>1</sup>. North Carolina has used this waiver for a pilot program called "Health Opportunities Pilots" to "cover evidence-based non-medical services that address specific social needs linked to health/health outcomes"<sup>2</sup>.

Innovation in service is possible but we must act quickly to support our neighbors in need. On behalf of our organizations and many we represent and serve – as well as the countless Minnesotans whose health and wellbeing would improve thanks to this legislation – we encourage your strong support for HF 3639.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/hsd/medicaid-policy/pages/waiver-renewal.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/a-first-look-at-north-carolinas-section-1115-medicaid-waivers-healthy-opportunities-pilots/>