



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

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February 3, 2022

Representative Jennifer Schultz
Chair, House Human Services Finance & Policy Committee
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Support for HF2914 (Reinstatement of DHS COVID Waivers)

Chair Schultz and Members of the Committee:

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis offers its strong support for the reinstatement and extension of COVID-19 waivers and modifications and the establishment of a temporary staffing pool to aid the ongoing pandemic response (HF2914). We appreciate the early attention being given to this issue in the 2022 legislative session and ask for your support in quickly passing this legislative proposal.

Catholic Charities is a regional leader of housing, emergency shelter and direct services, serving over 23,000 men, women, children and families each year. Throughout the pandemic, our program staff have been working tirelessly on the frontlines to serve those in need safely and without interruption.

In the first year of the pandemic, the dedicated actions of our frontline staff helped to keep our COVID-19 positive case rate to just 1 percent across sites—an incredible feat when one considers the increased risk for infection and poor health outcomes facing our clients. As DHS waivers expired and variants of the virus have surged, however, we have experienced growing case numbers and frequent outbreaks that have added stress and strain to our workforce, clients and guests.

The provisions of HF2914 would create program flexibilities and bring additional resources needed to sustain safety net services as we continue to navigate the pandemic. They would also allow our frontline staff—whether working with our shelter guests, housing tenants, children in daycare and day treatment, or waiver clients—to prioritize client interactions and supports over administrative procedures that have been made more burdensome by the pandemic.

Modifying signature requirements, allowing for CCAP billing during COVID-related absences, and establishing temporary staffing pools that recognize the staffing challenges facing shelter and housing programs are reasonable actions the legislature can take now to help ease the significant and ongoing stressors facing providers and our clients. We ask for your support and look forward to the prompt reinstatement of these waivers.

Sincerely,

Wendy Underwood
Vice President, Social Justice Advocacy & Engagement

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.