Oral Testimony for HF 816 by Diane J. Peterson

MN House Health Finance and Policy Committee

February 9, 2023

My name is Diane J. Peterson; I live in St. Paul.

Thank you Rep. Liebling for authoring this health care justice bill in 2022 and Rep. Hicks for authoring it this year.

Since 2015, when I co-founded a citizen activist group, Health Policy Advocates, aiming to improve health care in Minnesota, the problem of freeing Medical Assistance patients from managed care supervision has been an issue for me and my fellow group members. At a 2015 public forum, one of us asked District 64 Legislators to allow Medical Assistance patients the freedom to choose their own doctors and health care providers. We knew only 25% of Medical Assistance patients were given that right and we wanted all of them to have it. We still want this for them. Department of Human Services statistics show that in 2020 18% (203,275) of these patients were privileged with the freedom to choose their health care providers, but that shrank to 15.3% (192,022) in 2021. While the state engages in discrimination against the majority of Medical Assistance patients, it also seems to be reducing the amount of patients who get the Freedom to Choose.

Health Policy Advocates has named HF 816 the Freedom to Choose bill. It will eliminate an unacceptable unfairness which deprives over a million Minnesotans

[This month 1.3 million Medical Assistance patients are under managed care organization control, there were less than 1.1 million at the end of 2020.]

from being able to choose the health care providers they decide are best for their situations. It is simply wrong for my tax dollars to maintain a privileged system alongside a nonprivileged system in public health programs. I ask you to end the state-imposed discrimination against the majority of Medical Assistance patients by voting for HF 816, restoring the Freedom to Choose their preferred health care providers to all Medical Assistance patients. Thank you for hearing my testimony.