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Sen. Melissa Wiklund
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Rep. Tina Liebling
477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 28th, 2023

Chair Wiklund, Chair Liebling and members of the SF2995 conference committee,

Gender Justice is the organizational home of UnRestrict Minnesota, an expansive, diverse, and inclusive coalition for reproductive rights, health, and justice. UnRestrict Minnesota is a multi-racial coalition of more than 30 health care clinics, abortion funds, practical support groups, LGBTQ advocacy groups, faith communities, lawyers, doulas, and many more.

Our coalition represents the majority of Minnesotans. Across the state, Minnesotans have made their support for abortion rights abundantly clear — including by sending to the legislature our state's first pro-reproductive-freedom majority ever. We are writing in support of provisions in the Health Finance and Policy Omnibus Bill that support bodily autonomy and protect access to reproductive healthcare.

We strongly support the inclusion in the House of provisions from the Reproductive Freedom Codification Act (HF91/SF70), to remove unconstitutional, outdated, unjust, and harmful statutes.

Some of these provisions repeal statutes that were found unconstitutional this past summer. Lifting these restrictions had an immediate positive impact on patients, both Minnesotans, and people from the upper midwest and across the country who have lost meaningful access to reproductive health care in their home states. It was a proud moment for our state — an important step toward bringing our laws into line with the values that the majority of Minnesotans hold. Leaving these unconstitutional laws in statute creates confusion and uncertainty for providers and patients.

A majority of Minnesotans support repealing these and other restrictions on abortion, and expanding access to abortion, and they are very much looking to you to lead. In our recent statewide survey, an overwhelming 89 percent of Minnesota voters said they want to know what their elected officials are doing on the issue of abortion and want you to take decisive action.

Reproductive rights are meaningless without access. Abortion services are reimbursed at extremely low rates, covering less than half of the cost of providing this care. The forty percent increase in second trimester abortions due to restrictive out of state-laws that are increasing patient load overall in Minnesota, and the threat of nationwide changes to medication abortion due to a pending Texas court case, make these low rates all the more unsustainable. Thus, we are grateful for the inclusion of an increase to reimbursement rates for abortion and family planning services (20% in the House position and 10% in the Senate). We encourage the committee to seek to provide a 50% increase. This would be a small increase in the budget bill but have a significant impact for providers and patients.

Access to full spectrum reproductive health must include support for pregnant people. We support the increased funding for Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Families; Perinatal Quality Collaborative; MN Partnership to Prevent Infant Mortality; the model program for incarcerated parents; Maternal and Infant health programs; (Senate Article 4, Sec 54-56, 59; House Article 3, Section 187) and the increase of funding for and reforms to the Family Planning Special Projects program. (House Article 3, Section 121)

The House zeroes out the "Positive Alternatives to Abortion Program," while the Senate leaves the program as is. Throughout session we have supported The Positive Pregnancies Support Act (HF289 Olson/SF 336 Kunesh) which would maintain current PAA funding levels but ensure that these dollars support pregnant people free of misleading and coercive practices. In combination with the House and Senate investments in other pregnancy supports, we support the House position of ending the Positive Alternatives program, due to PAA's many abuses, and we strongly urge the committee to either adopt the House position, or if continuing any level of funding, to adopt the reforms contained in the Positive Pregnancies Support Act.

We support the Senate position excluding pre-exposure prophylaxis and post-exposure prophylaxis medications when used for the prevention or treatment of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (Senate Article 1, Section 38), and the House position clarifying Medical Assistance covers gender-affirming services. (House Article 1, Section 11).

These proposals would help bring our laws back into line with the values and wishes of the vast majority of Minnesotans, restore reproductive rights, and increase reproductive health care access and equity throughout our state. Please include them in your final bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Peterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Megan Peterson
Executive Director, Gender Justice