



**HIAWATHA HOMES, INC.**

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April 21, 2021

Representative Mohamud Noor  
Chair, Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
379 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Noor,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony. On behalf of Hiawatha Homes, Inc. in Rochester, MN, I am writing in support of the direct funding for the **Bridges to Healthcare Program**. As a local non-profit providing support to people with disabilities, we work directly with the local Workforce Development Career Planner and the students in the Bridges to Healthcare Program. Hiawatha Homes' Team Members assist with mock interviews, talk with students in the Bridges to Healthcare Program, and we have offered employment to some of the students as they are working their way through this program. Our partnership is very important, especially during this very difficult time of staffing shortages in our industry. I am writing to encourage you to direct appropriations to the Bridges to Healthcare Program for direct funding versus a different structure for disbursements.

Bridges to Healthcare is a public/private partnership that helps non-traditional students transition to a lifelong career in health care. These careers provide a livable wage, benefits and helps meet the talent shortage in health care and drive diversity of our workforce and inclusivity in our communities. The program has received direct appropriation funding from the State of Minnesota through the Workforce Development Fund for the past two bienniums, and prior to that received grant funding from the state that was eliminated. Bridges has proven to be a successful workforce pipeline for our communities by graduating more than 550 students in various health care tracks. These graduates are critical members of our health care workforce in southern Minnesota.

We appreciate the work of your committee as you seek to ensure the viability of our state's workforce development programs. Thank you for your consideration and support of Bridges to Healthcare.

Sincerely,

Cindy S. Ostrowski, CEO  
Hiawatha Homes Inc.

Cc: Representative Liz Boldon

**Empowering People  
Providing Choices  
Focusing on Individual Abilities  
Promoting Independence**