



8406 Sunset Road NE
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April 28, 2023

Dear members of the Omnibus Human Services Finance Bill Conference Committee:

I am reaching out on behalf of Rise, a provider organization supporting people with disabilities throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area and across Central Minnesota with services funded through the Disability Waiver Rate System.

We would like to thank both the House and Senate for your proposed investments in the Disability Waiver Rate System. If passed, these investments will allow for much needed increases in direct support professional wages and benefits. Fixing reimbursement rate challenges is foundational to addressing the current extremely destabilizing workforce shortage in waiver-funded disability services, and we thank you for recognizing this. The workforce challenges have impacted Rise and the people we support significantly. At Rise, we support over 3,000 people each year, with a staff team of just over 400. Prior to the pandemic, we had a team of nearly 500 and that gap post-pandemic, has led to long waiting times for people who want to access day and employment services.

We urge the conference committee to adopt the Senate level of funding for DWRS. Specifically, we ask you to support the following (Senate position is the language found in SF2934 3rd Engrossment and House position is the language found in SF2934 2nd Unofficial Engrossment):

- Senate position proposing to fully fund the Competitive Workforce Factor, Article 1, Section 33, beginning at line 46.18.
- Senate position proposing to adjust the SOC codes for Employment Exploration services, lines 43.20 through 43.23.
- Joint House/Senate position proposing to move the next rate adjustment up to January 2024 and every subsequent two years, lines 41.15 through 41.17 of the House position and line 41.25 of the Senate position.
- House position proposing to change the date of the data used for future adjustments to March, 22 months prior to the adjustment, lines 41.16 and 41.18 through 41.19 of the House position.

During the past 18 months, our base hiring wage has increased over 25% in order to attract direct support professionals to join our team and it is still falling short as wages continue to rise in the market. These wages are well beyond our current funding under DWRS and are



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unsustainable longer-term but are necessary to compete for qualified workers. With the investments proposed above, we will be able to sustain the current wage rate and can continue to increase wages and benefits to be competitive in the market in order to reduce the waiting list for services.

Thank you again for proposing significant investments in the DWRS system to allow for needed increases in the wages and benefits of Direct Support Professionals. Meaningful legislative action is needed this session to better support Minnesotans with disabilities to live connected and engaged lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lynn Noren'.

Lynn Noren
President & CEO