



May 1, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund, Chair Liebling and members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's comments on the omnibus health and human services finance and policy bill. We are grateful for your leadership as you make difficult decisions about this final budget as it will have immediate and long-term impacts on our communities.

LSS supports increased investment in services that strengthen prevention, early intervention, and family preservation. We also support investing in a continuum of services that will improve access to service, build community connection, and remove barriers to health and well-being.

Mental Health Bridge Funding. Providers are experiencing multiple challenges to meet the needs of Minnesotans accessing community-based mental health services. As we await the establishment of a future rate structure currently under design by the Department of Human Services, a temporary rate increase is critical to maintain access to services and build back a strong workforce. **Please accept the Senate position.**

Homeless Youth Act. Unfortunately, due to several factors, Minnesota youth who are experiencing homelessness on their own has continued to increase, and the need is much greater than currently available resources. Increased investment in the Homeless Youth Act will support providers to strengthen programs that have demonstrated success and merit further investment. **Please accept the House position.**

Safe Harbor. Additional investment in Safe Harbor programs will increase the prevention of sexual exploitation while helping more youth feel a sense of belonging and have opportunities to confront and cope with past traumas. **Please accept the House position.**

Kinship Caregiver Support. Establishing funding for informal kinship caregivers and kinship navigation services is critical to enhancing the safety and stability of these family arrangements and support prevention of the need for child welfare involvement. **Please accept the House and Senate positions.**

Prepared Meals. Establishing funding for prepared meals will help Minnesotans statewide who are facing food insecurity and lack the home, health, or ability to cook for themselves. **Please accept the Senate position.**



Thank you, again, for this opportunity, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration on these issues. Please contact me at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Thueson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Thueson
President
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota