



March 27, 2023

Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee,

My name is Lynn Noren, and I am the President of Rise - an organization that provides employment and day support services to people with disabilities. I am also the Chair of the Government Affairs Committee of MOHR, a statewide association of over 100 nonprofit organizations providing employment and day support services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on the House Human Services Finance Omnibus bill, the HF 2847 DE amendment.

Our state is in the midst of an incredibly challenging workforce shortage. While this workforce shortage is impacting all types of employers across the state, it is particularly destabilizing for Minnesotans with disabilities who are experiencing significant service access barriers due to the extreme shortage of available staff. Across the state, group homes are closing, vital support services for people living independently are going unrendered, and our employment and day support providers have growing waiting lists of Minnesotans with disabilities wishing to access employment and day services for whom providers cannot find staff.

To put it simply: If we as a state value Minnesotans with disabilities living engaged and connected lives, our state set reimbursement rates must be set at a level to pay for the staff supports necessary to make that possible. We appreciate the investments for waiver-funded disability services proposed in the House Human Services Finance Omnibus. **However, we believe these investments do not go far enough to address the current significant waiver-services access barriers faced by people with disabilities.** The accelerated implementation dates for upcoming rate adjustments included in the HF 2847 DE will help, but these adjustments will still be based on over two-year-old data. The proposals included in HF 999 - The Best Life Alliance bill - are critical to raising the wages of Direct Support Professionals so we can address our service access barriers. The current state surplus presents an opportunity for legislators to address multiple critical HHS needs, and we encourage this committee to support significant investments in the Disability Waiver Rate System to help more people with disabilities access the supports they need to live engaged and connected lives.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LYNN NOREN". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lynn Noren | MOHR Government Affairs Committee, Chair | Rise, President | lnoren@rise.org