



ARRM

April 14, 2020

Dear Senator Abeler and Members of the Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee:

ARRM represents nearly 200 organizations that provide residential support to individuals with disabilities and mental health challenges. Along with the rest of the country, we are walking through this uncharted territory of the COVID-19 pandemic and taking each new challenge and obstacle that is presented on a day by day basis.

Disability services providers and the Direct Support Professionals they employ to support individuals with disabilities are essential workers during this crisis. However, unlike the well-deserved attention that is being put on the nursing profession, nursing home employees and the service industry, our workforce has gone un-noticed and un-acknowledged for the critical supports they are providing.

We are grateful SF 3694 recognizes the Direct Support Professional workforce through the temporary rate increase that is provided to Home and Community Based Services.

Similar to other health and human services provider types, the disability services workforce is on the front lines of supporting people with possible COVID-19. Direct Support Professionals working in various settings with people with disabilities are shouldering increased responsibilities for everyday life and routines as traditional day programming and other activities have ceased. These additional responsibilities are often not billable under existing services and require more staffing and time and supplies. Additionally, these staff are working in close contact with individuals with often times complex medical support needs and have limited access to personal protective equipment.

With nearly 98% of all provider revenue coming from Medicaid reimbursement, it is critical that the state show their support for this workforce by temporarily increasing rates and allowing providers the ability to compensate their staff for the essential services they are providing.

While we are grateful for the temporary increase for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), we are continuing to advocate for ICF/DD services to be included in this legislation. Currently, there are 162 ICF/DDs in the state that support 1,343 individuals with disabilities. Along with staff that support people in HCBS settings, the Direct Support Professionals that work in these homes are putting their own health at risk everyday by providing these essential services. We request that the legislature support these staff in the same way they are supporting other critical services.

Finally, we would like to express our support for the inclusion of our policy priorities (SF 3117) in SF 3322, the Human Services Reform Policy Bill. The changes that are included in this bill will allow HCBS providers the opportunity to use their staff more efficiently through the streamlining of regulations and the opening of more service options.

Sincerely,

Sue Schettle, CEO

1185 Concord Street N Suite 302, South St. Paul, MN55075

Phone: (651) 291-1086 or Toll-free: (800) 551-2211

Email: info@arrmorg

WWW.ARRM.ORG

