



Minnesota Home Care Association

December 19, 2022

Governor Tim Walz  
130 State Capitol  
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King  
Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Majority Leader Elect Dzierdzic  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2203  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Speaker Hortman  
463 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz, Senate Majority Leader Elect Dzierdzic, and Speaker Hortman,

My name is Kathy Messerli and I am the Executive Director of the MN Home Care Association. Our organizational members provide hands-on care to more than 30,000 older Minnesotans and individuals with disabilities and complex health conditions in their homes. Congratulations to all three of you on your recent re-election and leadership roles, you have important work in front of you given our state's upcoming budget decisions and current state surplus. **I write today to express my strong concerns about the dire state of Minnesota's home care services infrastructure and to ask you to please prioritize taking action to address the home care services workforce shortage right away this session. Without action, further service provider organizations will have to consider ending or limiting their home care service offerings and more Minnesotans will be left without the health and support services they need to live full lives.**

**We are facing a crisis in Minnesotans' access to needed home care services.** The closing of agencies is an example of the crisis playing out around the state. Without further investments, we will continue to see a rapidly growing increase in Minnesotans who are not able to get the supports they need to remain living in their own homes. To highlight just two specific examples: Three Links, a home care service provider in Northfield MN, closed their doors earlier this year, no longer able to offer Homemaking services. This is a critical service that helps people with complex health needs to manage their general household activities and can therefore be the key piece that prevents having to transition to facility-based care. Cokato Manor Home Health in Cokato, MN recently went through the same difficult process of having to shut their doors.

**The current crisis in lack of access to home care services for Minnesotans is a result of current state-set service reimbursement rates that do not allow service provider organizations to pay a sufficient wage to hire and retain the incredibly valuable staff who provide this hands-on care.** The workforce shortage in home care services has been growing for some time, but lingering impacts of COVID, significant changes in the economic landscape, and lack of action by the legislature to address the issue last session, have all exacerbated the issue. We at the MN Home Care Association are involved in many other non-wage related initiatives focused on growing the workforce, but those initiatives will be far less impactful without meaningful progress on wages.

More Minnesotans, without access to home care services, are turning to more intensive, expensive, and currently overly stressed – facility-based care such as hospitals and other long-term care settings. You are likely familiar with recent alarming reports from multiple hospitals about the growing system back up resulting from hospitals' inability to safely discharge patients back to their homes due to lack of available home care staff. To better support older

Minnesotans and those with complex health needs to return to or remain living in their own communities and with their own families, our state must address the current Medical Assistance reimbursement rates that do not provide for the wages and benefits critical home care staff need and deserve.

**At recent interim Senate Human Services Committee hearings, outgoing GOP committee leadership and incoming DFL committee leadership have jointly expressed intentions to act on a long term care workforce stabilization bill in the first weeks of session. Please partner with each other and the legislature to take action early in session to allocate critically needed investments in Medical Assistance reimbursement rates to prevent the further erosion of the home care services workforce. Our state can and must do better in providing older Minnesotans and those with disabilities and complex health conditions the supports they need to live full lives.**

Thank you for your consideration of this critical need.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Messerli". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Messerli  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Home Care  
Association

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