

March 18, 2024

Senator Hoffman, Chair
Senator Abeler, Minority Lead
Members of the Committee

Dear Senator Hoffman, Senator Abeler, and Members of the Human Services Committee,

HCBS Waivers keep individuals with disabilities in their homes and communities. HCBS Waivers have been the catalyst for de-institutionalization. If we proceed with Waiver Reimagine as proposed, Minnesota will lead a new path as a state to RE-INSTITUTIONALIZE its citizens with disabilities. We must demand that DHS partner with stakeholders (persons with disabilities (PWD) and their families) to make these crucial decisions. **We should be partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all programs and policies that impact us!**

If designed and implemented in partnership with stakeholders, programs like HCBS Waivers can give PWD the support needed to remain in their homes and communities, and live life like any other Minnesotan. If we implement WR as proposed, we will send PWD and CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES to institutions.

Simplifying HCBS Waivers was a wonderful idea. However, DHS decided they knew best how to do that. They moved forward with the process thinking only about simplifying the process for DHS rather than for stakeholders.

There is much inequity built into HCBS Waiver that needs to be addressed. Access: the process to obtain accurate information about waivers and eligibility is complex and convoluted. I am highly educated, a member of the middle to upper class, and have much support from my friends and family. English is my first language, and I am emotionally and cognitively stable (most days 😊). Yet the process to get Charlie on a DD waiver was long and grueling. I gave up several times. Finally, I got through the process and secured eligibility for the DD Waiver for my son. Without all of this privilege, my son would be institutionalized. I am intentionally leaving out our constant fight to get the services and supports Charlie needs to remain in our home and community, as that is a whole other issue that pertains to waiver implementation).

Please demand that DHS authentically partner with us to create a system that works for everyone!

Respectfully,

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