

May 21, 2021

To: Governor Walz, Speaker Hortman and Majority Leader Gazelka, Chair Liebling, and Chair Benson

We, the undersigned organizations and coalitions, request that the remaining budget and policy discussions be conducted in an open and transparent forum. As organizations representing people served by HHS programs, and providers working with them, it is our responsibility to ensure that the pandemic environment and yet another special session does not further harm our state's commitment to HHS programs and services. The transparency challenges at this time of session are not limited to HHS or this year, but it is important that people have opportunities to follow and engage with end of session negotiations, be they in conference committees, working groups, or between leadership.

The global agreement shared with the public on Monday, May 17 stated that "working groups must complete finance spreadsheets by 5pm on Friday May 28, 2021" and language must be agreed to a week later. Given the complexity of health and human service issues and the large differences between your starting positions it is essential that there be opportunities for the public to view and provide feedback on the decisions being made. The need for the critical services provided through the HHS budget is heightened as Minnesotans struggle to withstand the ongoing pandemic, not to mention recover from it. The incredibly tight HHS target, and the complexity and difference of opinion around how federal pandemic relief funds will be spent in this area, makes it all the more important that public meetings are held to not just announce decisions and compromises, but to hold debates and discussions.

With one week to go, we expect that you plan to bring transparency to the remainder of your deliberations, and we hope that starts with promptly sharing any agreements made so far about the timeline and structure of discussions going forward, and beginning to meet publicly and sharing relevant information as soon as possible. We look forward to your response.

Signed,

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

Autism Society of Minnesota

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Fraser

Hammer Residences

Land Stewardship Project

Main Street Alliance of Minnesota

Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance

Minnesota Budget Project

Minnesota Community Action Partnership

Minnesota Council on Disability

Minnesota First Community Solutions

Minnesota First Provider Alliance

Minnesota Social Service Association

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental
Illness)

Rainbow Health Minnesota

The Arc Minnesota

This Is Medicaid Coalition