



August 26, 2021

To: Members of the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group
RE: Frontline Worker Criteria

Dear Members of the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Frontline Worker Pay Program. Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) is grateful for your leadership while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. As you finalize recommendations on the disbursement of \$250 million in direct financial support to frontline workers, **LSS strongly recommends that you include frontline workers in the social service sector.**

LSS is a provider of essential services employing more than 2,500 individuals and engaging with over 10,000 volunteers. Every year, LSS has the opportunity to connect with 1 in 65 Minnesotans across all 87 counties providing critical services to older adults, people with disabilities, and children, youth, and families. LSS has a long history of supporting our neighbors when, where and how they need it – and that commitment has never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, certain LSS services have been identified as essential and require in-person work. These frontline workers were and continue to be critical to helping people remain healthy and living as independently as possible in their home and community.

At LSS, these professionals include:

- **Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)** who provide person-centered support to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities;
- **Youth Outreach Workers** who support the healthy development of youth experiencing homelessness in supportive shelters and transitional housing sites;
- **Work Release Program Staff** who specialize in supporting individuals in a community setting as an alternative to incarceration; and
- **Home Delivered Meals Staff** who met unprecedented needs in communities across the entire state resulting in more than 4,000 meals produced in LSS kitchens *every day*. This helped ensure older adults, as well as children and families, were able to get the nutrition they needed while staying safe in their home and community.

During the pandemic, staff have innovated and continued to provide critical services and support while keeping staff, volunteers and individuals supported safe. One example is the implementation of a special support program called Healthy Heroes when there is a COVID-positive client in one of LSS' residential service locations. These staff commit to either 12- or 24-hour shifts to limit the number of individuals in



and out of sites with the goal of limiting exposure to and spread of the coronavirus. These selfless actions, deep generosity and courage allowed seamless support to our neighbors and has been an inspiration.

We thank you for your consideration and welcome continued discussion. If we can be of service or support on these issues, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Senior Director of Advocacy, Erin Sutton, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Thueson", is written over a thin horizontal line.

Patrick Thueson
Chief Executive Officer
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota