



March 24, 2021

Dear Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written public testimony regarding HF2127, the Governor's proposed budget for 2021. LSAP is a statewide division of Legal Aid, providing policy advocacy on issues affecting low-income Minnesotans, elder Minnesotans, and Minnesotans with disabilities in legislative and administrative forums. Specifically, LSAP offers the following testimony on Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) sections of the proposed budget:

\$750 Emergency Payment for Families Accessing MFIP

LSAP remains in strong support of the inclusion of a one-time \$750 emergency payment to more than 32,000 low-income parents and children participating in MFIP. This relief will address critical basic needs, including paying for diapers, food, winter clothes, work boots, utility debts, and Internet access. Many families accessing MFIP are still waiting for federal stimulus payments. Others experiencing unemployment have been unable to access needed unemployment insurance benefits or federal weekly pandemic payments.

MFIP COLA

LSAP is grateful for the modest cost-of-living adjustment that was added to the MFIP cash grant using the CPI. A small, annual index is the only way other states have avoided the decades of grant level stagnancy that have stalled Minnesota's cash assistance. This is a meaningful step forward.

Economic Assistance Program Uniformity

LSAP continues to support the Governor's proposal to simplify income support program administration and to reduce mandatory monthly paper-based reports for families participating in MFIP. Minnesota is the only state requiring a monthly eight-page packet of paperwork and verifications. All other states long ago moved to 6-month reporting in their TANF programs. These paperwork requirements do not move families toward stability in income or employment. Rather, they are arcane and onerous for families and administratively burdensome for county workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Webster".

Jessica Webster
Staff Attorney