BY PROVIDING FOOD AS MEDICINE,
WE NOURISH OUR CLIENTS AND BUILD COMMUNITY.

March 18, 2026

Senator John Hoffman, Chair

Senator Nathan Rasmusson, Ranking Minority Member

Senate Human Services Committee

Minnesota Senate

Dear Chair Hoffman and Ranking Member Rasmusson:

On behalf of Open Arms of Minnesota, we write in strong support of SF 4508. Open Arms has served Minnesotans living with life-threatening illness for more than 35 years, providing medically tailored meals, nutrition counseling, and compassionate care to thousands of clients across the state each year. We know firsthand the difference that targeted, medically appropriate nutrition makes in the health outcomes of older adults and others facing serious illness.

SF 4508 makes meaningful, practical improvements to Minnesota's senior nutrition framework. We are particularly pleased to see medically tailored meals explicitly recognized as a covered nutrition support service for older adults. This is a significant step forward. Medically tailored meals are not simply prepared food: they are individually designed to address the specific dietary requirements of individuals managing chronic and complex conditions. Including them in statute affirms their role as a core tool in the continuum of care for older Minnesotans. The bill also gives area agencies on aging explicit discretion to determine which services are most appropriate for the older adults in their planning and service area, a meaningful change that allows providers like Open Arms to tailor our work to the actual needs of the people we serve.

We also support the bill's expanded program goals, which now include coordination with health and long-term care systems and emergency preparedness systems. This language reflects the reality that nutrition programs do not operate in isolation. Stronger coordination between nutrition providers and health systems is essential to reaching the most vulnerable older adults, and Open Arms is committed to being a partner in that work. The new Food Delivery Support Account further strengthens the state's ability to fund nonprofit organizations with demonstrated expertise in delivering food customized to the needs of the populations they serve, which describes the core of what Open Arms does every day.

We urge the committee to advance SF 4508. Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to offer our support.

Sincerely,

Leah Hebert

Chief Executive Officer - Open Arms of Minnesota

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Open Arms of Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) organization, EIN: 41-1681317.