STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 9, 2018

The Honorable Kurt Daudt
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Room 463, State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Paul Gazelka
Senate Majority Leader
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3113
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Speaker Daudt and Majority Leader Gazelka:

42 days remain before you must adjourn this Legislative Session. As we look to those six weeks ahead, I want to outline the parameters that I believe will allow us to achieve a smooth and successful conclusion to our final session working together.

Let's begin where we agree. We should prioritize work on which we have all expressed a commitment to addressing this year. While our approaches on various policy proposals may differ, there are several issues where I believe compromise is within reach, including protecting elderly and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect, ensuring the safety of our schoolchildren, addressing the opioid crisis, and stabilizing the pensions of Minnesota workers.

On these important matters, there is no excuse for delay. I see no reason why these bills cannot be signed into law by the end of this month. Achieving compromises on these urgent matters now would make efficient use of our time, and allow us the opportunity to focus our attention on other matters that will require additional time and deliberation in the weeks ahead. Most importantly, resolving these issues now is the right thing to do for the people of Minnesota. I ask that the authors of these bills work with minority legislators and my Commissioners and staff to send these bills to my desk separately, and soon.

In the coming weeks, legislative committees will develop their supplemental budget and tax proposals. As you begin that work, I want to repeat that the long-term fiscal stability of our state remains my highest priority.

I refuse to let our next Governor and Legislature walk into the same fiscal mess I inherited in 2011. Since taking office, my Administration has worked hard to return fiscal stability to the State of Minnesota. We have turned a decade of deficits into repeated surpluses and replenished our budget reserves to record levels to help protect Minnesota from future economic downturns. My supplemental budget and tax proposals build on seven years of responsible financial management and ensure that our state's budget will remain structurally balanced in the next two biennia. To repeat: during my final year in office, I will not support any spending or tax proposals, which would threaten that stability.

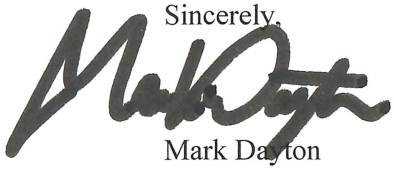
Furthermore, with a projected budget surplus of $329 million, I will not consider cuts to the operating budgets of state agencies, which we negotiated and enacted one year ago. And I will not consider any budget proposals that are based on false financial assumptions, irresponsible shifts, or gimmicks. We have worked hard and made tough decisions to undo previous budgeting tricks that caused serious harm to our state's finances. We should have learned from those past mistakes; but in the event these proposals are being seriously considered, know that any bill that does not include honest accounting will not earn my signature.

Finally, I will again insist that budget and policy bills should travel separately, and be debated and negotiated on their own merits. Year after year, we have had this conversation. And year after year, budget bills come to my desk laden with policy provisions. I will warn you again: those efforts to ram controversial policy issues down my throat in budget bills, at the peril of vitally important appropriations, will not gain my signature. I urge you to let majority and minority Committee Members find resolutions to policy matters in conference committees that are open to the public, offering transparency and opportunities for public debate and discussion.

In closing, we have six weeks to complete the work of this Legislative Session. We can, and should, work quickly this month to achieve results for Minnesotans on our shared priorities for protecting elderly and vulnerable adults, school safety, addressing the opioid crisis, and stabilizing workers' pensions. Thereafter, we have important work to do to enact tax relief for Minnesotans, invest in better educations for our students, make urgently-needed infrastructure improvements, and more. I am confident that, by working together, we can reach agreements, which will achieve our shared goals, before you must adjourn on May 21st. I look forward to working with you in these remaining weeks to give Minnesotans the collaborative and productive ending to this Legislative Session that they expect and deserve. My Commissioners, staff, and I will be available at all times to work with you to achieve that essential outcome.

My best regards.

Sincerely,



Mark Dayton
Governor

cc: The Honorable Tom Bakk, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Melissa Hortman, House Minority Leader