



March 11, 2024

Dear Human Services Finance Committee Members:

For many people with serious mental illnesses, the economic and social isolation they face in society impact them more profoundly than the symptoms of their illness. Psychosocial clubhouses are evidence-based, member-led programs that are incredibly effective at alleviating the social-emotional impact of discrimination against people with mental illnesses. Additionally, membership at clubhouses is lifelong – clubhouses provide a permanent support system, no waitlist, appointment, or prescription required.

**NAMI Minnesota enthusiastically supports HF 4514 to create a medical assistance benefit and demonstration project for clubhouses.**

Our members are committed to the clubhouse model because it reflects the values of justice, dignity, and respect for all people affected by mental illnesses that NAMI Minnesota champions. Unfortunately, many people with mental illnesses and their loved ones have been traumatized by treatment they received (or what happened to them when they attempted to get treatment) in more clinical settings. At clubhouses, people with mental illnesses are treated as valued members of a community rather than problems that need to be fixed. Members work side by side with staff to lead the clubhouse’s programming and operations, affording both members and staff more dignity and respect than they might receive in more traditional treatment models.

Many NAMI Minnesota members are also members of clubhouses or have loved ones who are members. One member, Mark, told NAMI how meaningful it was for his recovery when he was entrusted to do an important job at his clubhouse: “It made me a part of something bigger than me. I went from needing a place to hold on to during rocky times to eventually *myself* offering a steady hand to others. And that works.” Mark lived with an active addiction for decades, and with the support of a clubhouse, has been sober for over five years.

Despite their positive impact, Minnesota only has a few clubhouses across the state. Clubhouses are especially lacking in rural areas, but even in the Twin Cities, they struggle to find the funding to open and stay open. For example, the clubhouse Vail Place recently lost funding for their Uptown Minneapolis location.

Clubhouses need a permanent source of funding they can depend on for long-term sustainability. They also require an immediate financial boost to meet the high level of need. And Minnesotans need clubhouses. We urge you to pass HF 4514 as written. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

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