

March 19, 2023

Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee

RE: House File 1279

Members of the Committee,

My name is Em Westerlund and I am the Statewide Medical Forensic Policy Program Coordinator at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (or MNCASA). MNCASA is a statewide membership coalition and collective voice of organizations and individuals committed to ending sexual violence.

It is my job to know what is happening throughout the state regarding medical forensic exams for sexual assault survivors. The fact is, the issues in our current exam payment approach have been known for over a decade, and systems professionals have been trying to develop solutions for just as long. HF 1279 is the culmination of our collective effort to improve this system for sexual assault nurse examiners, hospitals, law enforcement, county payors, and, most critically, victim-survivors.

Currently, Minnesota is one of only six states in the nation that uses a county payor model. With 87 different county payors, all located in different county departments, many issues arise. Shifts in staffing, budgetary constraints, and confusion about obligations are all challenges that can result in inconsistent or disparate payments for hospitals and clinics. Unfortunately, our county-by-county approach to exam payment is not working.

The clarification of best practices for medical-forensic exams shifts Minnesota from a testing model for sexually transmitted infections to a proactive treatment model. This is in line with guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and reflects best practice in forensic medicine.

Perhaps most critically, House File 1279 will help to ensure that victims/survivors of sexual assault receive high quality, trauma-informed services. The creation of a state fund will help ensure equity in billing and payment across and reduce the likelihood that a victim/survivor may inadvertently be billed for their medical forensic exam.

Minnesota has made great strides over the past several years to ensure that our state policies for sexual assault victims reflect national best practices. House File 1279 is another

important step toward ensuring that victims/survivors of sexual assault in our state receive the best possible services at every step of their journey toward healing and justice. Thank you.

In Community,

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