



## REPAIR THE HARM - BUILD THE COMMUNITY

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Public Safety Committee  
File HF 1712  
Youth Intervention  
Letter of support

Dear Public Safety Committee Members,

I wish to formally write as the Executive Director for Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project(LARJP) my support for this bill and will outline why below.

LARJP started as a grassroots effort back in 2004 and in 2007 received the 501.c3 non-profit status. From 2004-2021 we served juveniles between the ages of 8 and 18 and in the fall of 2021 we added a young adult program for ages between 18-25. We receive referrals from our Justice System partners, County Attorney, each police department in Crow Wing County, probation and schools. We receive referrals that are pre-charge, post-charge pre-disposition and post-disposition and have steadily increased the number of referrals and now over 100 clients are referred and we use restorative practices to address the offense, giving everyone the opportunity and a voice to repair the harm and begin moving forward. Over the past three years we have been adding volunteers who have lived experiences that can help reach the youth in understanding the depth of choices and what things can look like if behaviors continue. Our recidivism has been below 15% since the beginning and has dropped down to 13.5% during 2021/22.

Addressing the needs of the young people is absolutely a top priority, it has exponential impact and how we choose to support or not will depend whether it's a positive or a negative return. Today more than ever there are rising needs for youth across this country and we see it in our substance prevention efforts, our court diversion and intervention programs and while collaborating with the community. Our future, everyone's future depends heavily on how we respond to these growing needs and for LARJP we choose to fill the needs, collaborate to identify current needs and address the many gaps and barriers, it the right and just thing to do but funding is a must.

We have repeatedly attempted to secure funding from The Department of Public Safety and have only received support a couple times in almost 20 years. If more funding was available and we secured some of it we would be able to hire much needed staff, offer extended programming, youth development and wrap around services that are lacking currently. We would be able to implement programming that addresses the mental health and substance abuse epidemic to assist with early detection and action with local partners. This is not a matter of if funding could happen, there is a great need for funding for our program and many others across the state. With the right funding, the right support and programming can be put in place, helping to keep Minnesota the best state to live.

Thank you for your consideration of this much needed support!

Respectfully,

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