



Saint Paul
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent School District 625

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Office of Specialized Services

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To: Representative Lieblich and House Finance and Policy committee members
From: Robert Arnold MA CCC-SLP
RE: House Bill 1175 (Youkim): Modifying medical assistance coverage for special education school social work services.
Date 3/8/2023

My name is Rob Arnold and I'm the Assistant Administrator for Medicaid reimbursement in St. Paul Public Schools. I'm a licensed Speech Language Pathologist and a proud parent of two young adults who have both received mental health supports through the schools. I'm writing to support House Bill 1175.

I've been in my current role for a year and a half and have quickly learned that St Paul Schools alone is missing out on an estimated 4-5 million dollars annually in reimbursement for special education mental health services. The statewide estimate is over 20 million. The reason is that the CTSS benefit requires school social workers to complete a diagnostic formulation and give a mental health diagnosis to a child as part of their special education evaluation. However, these requirements for reimbursement are not part of special ed law and are actively discouraged by the center for medicaid services.

The CTSS benefit has changed slightly over the years thanks to the work of many individuals and committee recommendations. Still, only six school districts utilize this benefit because the requirements at the heart of CTSS have not changed. Therefore, schools must use 100% of their educational funds to pay for services, rather than seeking available federal dollars. As a colleague of mine remarked, CTSS is a meaningless benefit.

In response to NAMI's letter of opposition to SF1028 and HF1175 and the technical assistance document from DHS: The Center for Medicaid Services does not require and actively discourages states from requiring a mental health diagnosis in order for schools to seek reimbursement. According to CMS "States can determine that some services are medically necessary for children and youth without a diagnosed behavioral health condition." On the one hand, DHS and NAMI recognize the need for children to receive mental health services and the need for schools to receive additional funding for those services, yet they still work to actively oppose legislation that will allow this to happen.

In closing, I want to emphasize that modifying or eliminating the CTSS benefit will not change the services students receive in the schools. School social workers across MN provide high quality, medically necessary, mental health services to students right now. This bill will begin to allow school districts to access available federal funds for reimbursement.

Sincerely,
Robert Arnold, MA CCC-SLP
Assistant Administrator of Medicaid Reimbursement, St. Paul Public Schools