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Support for Adolescent Mental Health Promotion (HF2930/SF2995)

Dear Chair and Members:

On behalf of HealthPartners, we want to express our support for **Adolescent Mental Health Promotion (HF2930/SF2995)** to implement new community or peer-led mental health promotion programming for young people in community settings to improve their mental health and resilience and reduce racial disparities in mental health.

In partnership with other health systems, counties, community-based organizations and the state, HealthPartners is celebrating 10 years of progress of Make It Ok, an ongoing initiative to stop the stigma of mental illnesses. Launched in collaboration with HealthPartners, Regions Hospital, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and other partners, the campaign works through community engagement, trained ambassadors, partners, online resources and more to mobilize and share Make It OK throughout communities. By creating open and caring conversations and helping to change attitudes about mental health and illnesses, Make It OK is increasing understanding and reducing the stigma so those living with a mental illness get the care and support they deserve.

But there is much to still do.

There has been a growing mental health crisis among young people since 2009. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this crisis, with increased reports of depression, hopelessness, stress, anxiety, and suicide. Nearly 16% of Minnesota youth (ages 12-17) experienced at least one major depressive episode in 2022, double the rate from 2015.

The proposal in HF2930/SF2995 will build a network of community-driven mental health supports using culturally responsive, evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies to help young people improve all aspects of their mental health, especially their relationships and social connections, awareness and understanding of mental health, and help-seeking behavior. By leveraging trusted leaders embedded in the community, this promotional effort has the possibility to earn community trust and deepen our own knowledge of different cultural challenges in addressing mental health. We aim to learn more about and address the stigma or social implications of addressing mental health in diverse communities – a key objective of Make It OK.

HealthPartners urges the state legislature to support HF2930/SF2995. Young people need opportunities to develop skills to thrive and experience positive mental health, including the ability to engage with supportive adults and peers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Walsh".

Andrea Walsh
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pahoua Yang Hoffman".

Pahoua Yang Hoffman
SVP, Government & Community Relations