



Representative Peter Fischer, Chair
Behavioral Health Policy Subdivision
MN House of Representatives

March 9, 2022

Chair Fischer and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Fraser, I am writing to convey our strong support for and urge the Committee to pass Representative Hanson's House File 3738 – policy changes and updates to Children's Therapeutic Supports Services (CTSS).

Fraser's Perspective

Fraser is Minnesota's largest provider of children's mental health services. Fraser also has a long history of serving very young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We have seven clinic locations in the Twin Cities and serve children from across the state. Our clients often benefit from community based interventions such as day treatment or skills services which are regulated by the Children's Therapeutic Supports Services statute and rules.

The proposal in HF 3738 incorporates collective work from a joint effort across community providers, schools, the Departments of Education and Human Services and the Governor's Children's Cabinet to increase access to children's mental health care. The workgroups formed under this effort developed recommendations across the multiple areas of children's mental health care access, including opportunities to streamline program environments, provider roles and reporting requirements. HF 3738's language is aligned with these recommendations, including working with the Department in developing a new broad children's mental health care benefit which can flex with the needs of our children and families.

In calendar years 2021 and 2022, Fraser is struggling to maintain services because of the significant service interruptions caused by the ongoing pandemic and reduced service capacity created by the extreme workforce crisis. Fraser's waitlist is growing. At the same time, we are forced to serve fewer clients because of factors beyond our control.

A critical sustainability challenge is in the ongoing regulatory and reporting requirements of our public behavioral health programs, including children's therapeutic supports services (CTSS). Currently, we spend a growing amount of staff time and efforts complying with documentation, reporting and administrative requirements rather than focusing time on delivering high quality care to clients. We are feeling the weight of this burden exponentially in this current workforce crisis – existing staff are working beyond 100% capacity to meet the growing needs of our communities, all while having to spend more time in reporting and documentation. We are losing clinicians from the mental health field in part because of this. More so, our clients are feeling the weight, establishing a relationship with one clinician only to be transferred when that person leaves the field. We are faced with more needs, the same high administrative burdens and less people to do it all.

Fraser asks for the Committee's support in increasing access to CTSS services by passing HF 3738, which takes many steps toward removing significant regulatory barriers demanding/ taking much of providers time away from client care.

Thank you for considering our request. Please do not hesitate to reach out to abigail.vavra@fraser.org or my colleague Lucas Kunach, lucas.kunach@fraser.org, who testified earlier today with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abigail Vavra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Abigail Vavra
Public Policy and Compliance Counsel
Fraser