



March 17, 2022

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 3418 (Vang)

Dear Chair Schultz and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's (LSS) support of HF 3418 to strengthen the mental health workforce by removing barriers and creating equitable pathways to the mental health profession. LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees serving one in 65 Minnesotans. We believe that behavioral health builds the foundation for health and well-being, and our services provide individuals and families with critical access to mental health care in communities across the state – often in rural areas with few options for access to these services.

Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was already difficult for Minnesota's mental health system to sustainably and adequately meet the needs of individuals and families. We have seen a consistent increase in people seeking mental health services, especially in the last 12 months, and the severe mental health workforce shortage has made it challenging to provide adequate and stable resources to our neighbors. This is particularly evident in the rural areas served by LSS, where there are often few options for access to mental health services. The shortfall is similarly intensified amongst culturally informed and diverse professionals who are from communities that face barriers to accessing care. LSS supports proposals that eliminate systemic barriers and diversify our workforce to better meet the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). HF3418 would further grow and diversify our mental health workforce through increased investment in education, training and supervision.

This proposal is a critical step to ensuring that our workforce and mental health care system is meeting the needs of Minnesota's diverse communities by removing barriers to the profession. Thank you for your consideration and support of HF 3418. LSS commits to ongoing partnership in developing, recruiting and strengthening a strong and diverse workforce that supports the growing mental health needs of all Minnesotans. If we can be of service on these issues, please reach out to me or our Senior Director of Advocacy, Erin Sutton, at [erin.sutton@lssmn.org](mailto:erin.sutton@lssmn.org).

Sincerely,

Trevor B. Johnson, MSW, LICSW

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TBJ", written over a white background.

Senior Director of Behavioral Health Services  
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