



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

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Minneapolis, MN 55403
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cctwincities.org

February 23, 2022

Representative Peter Fischer
Chair, House Behavioral Health Policy Division
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Support for HF3215 & Children's Day Treatment

Chair Fischer and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, I write to offer our support for HF3215, a bill to establish community mental health workforce grants, and to call attention to the important role children's day treatment programs play in supporting the health and wellness of Minnesota youth.

Catholic Charities is a regional leader of housing, emergency shelter and direct services, serving over 23,000 men, women, children and families annually. This includes our children's day treatment program, which operates in partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools to provide voluntary, year-round therapeutic services to students in grades K-8 who have mental health needs or behavioral challenges that hinder academic progress.

Through a trauma-informed lens, children in day treatment receive skills development, individual and group therapy, and family education and support to help them build healthy relationships and learn new ways of coping and managing difficult feelings and situations. This full-day program combines treatment and academics in a co-located school setting, allowing children to receive care without having to leave their community and helping to reduce demands on more expensive hospital and emergency department visits.

Day treatment programs provided a valuable service to children and families before COVID-19, and the need for such programming has only grown as we've witnessed the mental health impact of the pandemic on children and their families. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also taken its toll on day treatment providers, who have struggled to maintain services and supports amid quarantines and COVID-19 protocols, staffing challenges, and financial losses tied to the inability to bill for these fee-based services.

The emergency relief afforded in HF3215 would provide important resources to help stabilize the current community mental health workforce, including day treatment staff, by supporting hiring and retention bonuses and staff training and supervision. This investment is needed to prevent the further deterioration of this vital component of Minnesota's mental health system.

At the same time, we know the financial losses some day treatment providers have experienced during the pandemic has threatened the closure of programs across the state. Investments in current and future workforce needs, while necessary, will not erase this reality. As this proposal moves forward, we urge you to also include day treatment stabilization grants to address the revenue gaps that remain and

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.

to explore ongoing reforms and investments needed to preserve and strengthen this program into the future.

We ask for your support of HF3215 and children's day treatment programs, to help ensure more children receive the support and skills they need to thrive in school and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Kozerski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" and last name "Kozerski" clearly distinguishable.

Keith Kozerski
Senior Division Director, Children & Family Services