



Representative Jennifer Schultz, Chair
Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
February 16, 2021

Dear Madame Chair and Committee Members

On behalf of Washburn Center for Children, I am sending this letter to support Representative Bierman's Bierman's House File 635 – school-linked mental health funding.

Washburn Center for Children's mission is to nurture every child and family's family's well-being and full potential through transformative children's children's mental health care. Our expert trauma informed therapeutic care helps children struggling with social, emotional or behavioral challenges such as loss or grief, anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder, and trauma. With three office locations - Brooklyn Park, Edina and Minneapolis - Washburn Center for Children serves more than 3,700 children and approximately 11,100 family members annually in the Twin Cities metro area. More than 65% of children served are from families with low-incomes.

Washburn Center for Children has been a partner mental health provider in the school-linked mental health program for 16XX years. We are located within 28 schools, serving more than 550 students annually.

Washburn Center for Children co-locates 27 clinicians within our schools. We provide direct therapy services to children. We also function as part of the school team -

- following up with school staff,
- teaching staff skills for identifying a student's student's symptoms and de-escalation techniques
- coordinating services with school leadership
- follow up/ transition of services for students to access more intensive services in our clinic

The school-linked mental health grant allows us to work with school staff, coordinate care, and deliver services to students who are uninsured or underinsured. This grant allows us to serve children and families beyond the walls of our clinic sites. This flexibility helps our client's client's greatly.

Insert other examples of how school-linked mental health helps Washburn and surrounding community. A student's mental wellbeing provides an essential foundation that supports all other aspects of human development—from forming relationships with family and friends to achieving success in school. Childhood trauma and toxic stress can have profound, life-long health consequences on a student's emotional development. Fortunately, so does intentional, holistic mental health care. By meeting families where they are—psychologically, economically and geographically—Washburn Center's school-linked therapy ensures students receive the tools and support to thrive and succeed.

In the time we have been partnering in the school-linked mental health program, we have seen amazing outcomes. These include: xxxx.....insert Washburn results here.



washburn.org

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Parents shared with us the impact of our family-centric and culturally responsive therapy on their lives. Most recently, parents and caregivers indicated that:

- 98% would recommend Washburn Center to a friend in need of similar help.
- 90% felt the services received at Washburn Center helped their families improve and cope with problems

We increasingly see the mental health needs of children and families are spiking as they are dealing with the trauma of the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and the countless unanswered questions about how to maintain economic stability, personal safety and a sense of future. As needs are spiking in community life, capacity to meet those needs is increasingly imperiled.

Under the pandemic environment, School-Linked Mental Health, is precarious. By its nature, School-Linked Mental Health was designed to remove barriers students had to accessing mental health support. The service specifically focuses on serving children and families who are otherwise not able to access mental health. Not surprisingly, with the onset of the pandemic, barriers only became more significant for children and families who were School-Linked Mental Health clients. Even with telehealth innovations, over half of students continue to receive supports, and, the length of session due to technology challenges, sustaining attentions and countless other interruptions have made telehealth a positive and temporary bridge for the unique School-Linked population.

As a result, School-Linked Mental Health providers are in significant risk of not being financially able to sustain their current infrastructure to continue to serve students and families in the coming school year. With the conclusion of the federal Paycheck Protection Program for eligible providers, and after almost six months of substantially diminished revenues, many providers are looking to layoffs as some of their only remedies. Prior to COVID, one of the greatest challenges for providers was recruitment and retention of mental health counselors. Providers are seeking all lifelines for a more durable solution that will allow them to prepare to deliver critical mental health support. The School-linked mental health program is a key component of our community mental health care system. Please support increasing funding to the program and House File 635.

Thank you for your consideration and support of the mental health needs of our children and families.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Steinmetz".

Tom Steinmetz
CEO
Washburn Center for Children



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