



Health and Human Services Conference Committee
Minnesota State Legislature
May 10, 2021

Dear HHS Conference Committee Members

On behalf of Mental Health Resources, Inc., I am sending this letter to support proposals in House File 2128 related to **culturally informed behavioral health training requirements and culturally diverse workforce development support, originally carried by Senator Utke (SF 1362) and Representative Vang (HF 970).**

Mental Health Resources (MHR) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) community mental health agency providing community-based mental health and substance use disorder services to more than 6,500 people with serious and persistent mental illness each year primarily in Ramsey, Dakota, and Hennepin Counties. MHR also serves people in St. Louis County and the 7 County metro area. MHR directly provides many of the community-based services that people with serious mental illness need to live in the community in settings of their choice. Services provided include, mental health targeted case management, assertive community treatment, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, housing support services, adult rehabilitative mental health services, care coordination and a community support program.

As a community mental (and chemical) health program and safety net provider, Mental Health Resources, Inc. serves clients and communities who would not have access to mental and chemical health care.

Our staff are key/ critical to our ability to provide high quality care to our clients and communities. Our entire behavioral health system is facing a workforce crisis, with more providers retiring than are coming into the field. The shortage is particularly true for our communities of color, whose members face even more barriers to accessing care and inequities. Mental Health Resources, Inc. supports proposals to further diversify our workforce through more diversity training and increased funding/ investment into education and training supports to allow more students and workers from communities of color to enter the mental health workforce.

Most importantly, the bill –

- Convenes a workgroup to address barriers in the current professional licensure process and consider an alternative licensure pathway while maintaining high quality care.
- Expands the definition of a mental health practitioner to include students completing internships while in their programs (graduate or undergraduate). This way students, particularly non-traditional students with families and children, do not have to choose between completing their degree and making wages to feed their families. This also allows agencies to hire more mental health practitioners, under a wider net of eligibility.
- Require health plans to pay for clinical trainees to support required supervision.



- Require the different boards to have members that represent the state geographically and in terms of diversity and underrepresented groups (including disabilities). The Board of Social Work did this a year ago.
- Require continuing education to become culturally informed and to embrace cultural humility by adding four hours focused on this content.
- Allow DHS grants to fund cultural healers, expanding on work you authorized in the opioid bill.
- Create a workgroup to look at providing supervision across the different licenses to help address particular shortage in Greater MN.
- Provide funding for mental health professionals from communities of color to become supervisors.
- Expand eligibility for the health professional education loan forgiveness program to LADCs and add funding specifically for mental health professionals from communities of color.

All these proposals are a first step, but an important first step, to bringing more diverse staff candidates into the mental and chemical health fields. Thank you for your consideration and support of the mental health care needs of our diverse communities and our mental health care system in Minnesota. Please support these provisions in the HF 2128.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Henderson", is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

Ann Henderson, CEO
Mental Health Resources, Inc.