



May 7, 2025

Representative Robert Bierman  
Co-Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Centennial Office Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Jeff Backer  
Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Centennial Office Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Co-Chair Bierman and Co-Chair Backer,

I am writing to express my great opposition to the \$1 million cut to the Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRHS) grant in HF2435, the Health budget bill. Family Tree Clinic has been a recipient of this grant for decades (formerly FPSP) and the funding is critical to ensure our patients have access to family planning services like contraceptives counseling, screening and testing for sexually transmitted infections, and referrals for other medical or mental health care regardless of their insurance status.

Funding for family planning, through the SRHS grant, saves taxpayer money by decreasing teen and unwanted pregnancy rates and reducing the rates of STI, HIV, and cervical cancer. This is equivalent to an estimated taxpayer savings of \$7 for every public dollar spent.

Family Tree Clinic is the sole provider of sexual health education in the Hennepin and Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Centers, reaching youth who are often left out of critical health education and at a greater risk for sexual health disparities. Recently, a young participant told one of our educators, "*You're the only person I can just relax with around here,*" and asked to meet weekly. That trust makes it possible to talk openly about STI risk, testing, and healthy

communication - foundational conversations for sexual health. SRHS funding is vital to making this work possible.

Family Tree Clinic operates the statewide Minnesota Sexual Health Hotline. In the first quarter of 2025, the hotline saw a remarkable 83% increase in texts, calls, and webchats - thanks to critical funding from SRHS, the sole source of support for the Hotline. This growth reflects the urgent need for accessible, free, and confidential sexual health information at this critical moment for public health, especially in rural Minnesota where local resources are limited or non-existent. For many in Minnesota, this Hotline is a lifeline, and without SRHS funding, it wouldn't exist.

SRHS funding is vital for Minnesotans facing the greatest sexual and reproductive health services barriers and disparities, who rely on community clinics like Family Tree Clinic. 66% of our patients live below 200% of the federal poverty level, 81% are ages 35 or younger, 78% identify as LGBTQ, and 32% are people of color. This funding directly supports affordable and comprehensive sexual health education and medical care for our communities. Without it, thousands of Minnesotans will lose access to essential health care they cannot get elsewhere. This investment is critical.

Minnesota is fortunate to have many high-quality community clinics that serve underserved populations because of the SRHS grant. Cutting the funding to this grant program does a disservice to Minnesotans who rely on our clinic and clinics like ours all across the state to receive care. Please do not support cutting this grant.

Sincerely,

*Annie Van Avery*

Executive Director