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DATE March 29, 2022
TO Human Services Policy and Finance Committee
FROM Pahoua K. Yang, MSSW, PhD, LICSW, LP
Vice President, Community Mental Health & Wellness
Wilder Foundation

Written Testimony: HF 3404 Integrated Therapeutic Services Model

Chair Schultz and Committee Members:

Wilder has served children and families with mental health care for nearly 100 years, constantly evolving our services to meet their new and changing needs. Back in 2016, we worked with the Intermediate School District 287 (ISD 287) to create **a brand-new model** of integrated, high-intensity, interdisciplinary mental health services.

As powerful advocates for their students and families, **ISD 287 had tried implementing nearly every relevant mental health service in the MHCP Manual** to help their high-acuity, setting 4 special education setting kids stabilize and grow. ISD 287 found that no existing mental health service offered the level and type of support that their students desperately needed. They were unable to stem the flow of crises, injuries, emergency calls, & hospitalizations. In almost every instance, kids cycled through this cascade and ended up back in the classroom without any new or meaningful supports.

Resources were constantly expended to deal with crises, but nothing was done to actually engage that child in a meaningful way to give them the immediate skills to cope and survive in their environment. More importantly, nothing was done to provide them with the personal, and critical work of identifying their underlying mental health issues to work towards lasting, lifelong improvements in their ability to live and grow.

Now, the Intensive Therapeutic Services Model offers real promise for kids and families who were otherwise being failed by our mental health service set. It is the product of a yearlong, in-depth consultation and three years of piloting, evaluating, and refinement. It is informed by brilliant mental health professionals, passionate educators, and incredible parents and families. It has brought hope to kids, families, and schools that were in survival mode, and made in-roads to lasting change.

Without your support, this model cannot continue to exist.

Much of this model does not fit within our current benefit set - it has only been made possible by support through the Minnesota Department of

Human Services and through demanding investments from Wilder and ISD 287. It is not sustainable and it will never grow to reach other kids or communities in desperate need throughout the state without legislative action!

Right now, it is your choice whether or not these kids – and kids like them across Minnesota – have access to the care they need.

You can choose to support legislation that makes the right level of care accessible in a sustainable way. Your vote for HF 3404 says that our kids' immediate stability and long-term outcomes are worth investment.

I am urging you to support HF 3404.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pahoua K. Yang', written in a cursive style.

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