

February 28, 2023

To: Members of the House Human Services Policy Committee

Re: HF 2058

Dear Chair Fischer and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HF 2058: Cultural and ethnic minority infrastructure grant program. Minnesota has longstanding significant deficits in the mental health workforce. Not only do we need a larger mental health workforce, but we also need one that can be responsive to the needs of our diverse community. Minnesota has long experienced a shortage of providers for mental health services. This shortage is felt most acutely in rural areas and for culturally specific providers.

This challenge is heightened with the recently documented rise in mental illness, with the Center for Disease Control estimating that fully 40% of the population meet the diagnostic criteria for anxiety, depression, or substance use disorder. As more people will need to seek mental health treatment, there is an urgency to the need to increase the supply of community mental health professionals, especially those able to meet the needs of our diverse community.

HF 2058 provides grant activities that can start to address some of these challenges with workforce development activities, outreach, service expansion, training and grant funds to increase the availability of culturally responsive mental health and substance use disorders services. In addition, HF 2058 could be used to increase interpreter services in residential treatment settings which often struggle to meet the needs of clients with limited English proficiency.

These activities would help address the gap in disparities in mental health and substance use disorders across the state and is a wise investment in our community.

Sincerely,

*Ellie Skelton*

**Ellie Skelton MA**

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