



Representative Mohamud Noor, Chair
Human Services Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
February 9, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

On behalf of Alluma Inc. I am sending this letter to support Representative Bierman's House File 564 – increase funding to the School-Linked Mental Health program.

Alluma Inc is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic that serves the rural and frontier region of Kittson, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Polk and Red Lake counties. We currently operate a School Linked Mental Health grant program within 23+ school districts. We co-locate mental health professionals/ therapists and practitioners within our schools, provide clinical supervision to school district staff along with training, development and support to the district to address the needs of students with mental health needs. We also function as part of the school team -

- following up with school staff,
- teaching staff skills for identifying a 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, deliver services to students without insurance or with very high out of pocket expenses. This grant allows us to serve children and families beyond the walls of our clinic sites. This flexibility helps our clients greatly. By its nature, School-Linked Mental Health was designed to remove barriers that 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. The additional funding for this much needed service will allow Alluma to expand the services provided to more children. It will also assist families to not have to choose between paying for a vital service for their child or put food on the table due to high out pocket expenses. In addition, it will provide continued support for our summer program to bolster services and supports for children to build and maintain continuity of care throughout the summer before schools starts in the fall.

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We are seeing an increase in mental health needs in children and families which is spiking as they are dealing with the trauma of the pandemic 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. Prior to and exacerbated by COVID, the greatest challenges for providers are 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 and for our community mental health care system. Please support increasing funding to the program and House File 564.

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

Sincerely,

Shauna Reitmeier, MSW, LGSW
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Alluma Inc.

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