 Monday, March 20, 2023

To: Minnesota Representative Tina Liebling, Health Finance Policy Chair

 Minnesota Representative Robert Bierman, Health Finance Policy Vice Chair

 House Health Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 2930 Article 2, Section 68 ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

Dear Representative Liebling, Representative Bierman, and the House Health Finance and Policy Committee;

I am submitting this letter in support of HF2930, specifically the Adolescent Mental Health Promotion section that will support communities’ capacity to train and equip young people to address youth trauma and toxic stress. Multiple resources demonstrate that our youth are struggling in school and in their personal relationships. The Center for Disease Control recently reported that in 2021, almost 60% of female students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness during the past year and nearly 25% made a suicide plan, and 42% of high school students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks in a row that they stopped doing their usual activities. [YRBSS Data Summary & Trends | DASH | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs_data_summary_and_trends.htm?ACSTrackingID=DM98539&ACSTrackingLabel=Feb+2023+-+YRBS+DSTR+2.0+Release&deliveryName=DM98539&utm_campaign=publications-2023&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

Our existing clinical mental health system needs more support and resources, but that is only part of the solution. For many young people, clinical therapeutic interventions are not an option due to historic mistrust of health systems, lack of appropriate insurance, transportation and language barriers and persistent stigma. Developing a robust primary prevention strategy that focuses on the power of youth ambassadors as change agents will foster a peer led movement that builds resilience and healthier young people.

My prior work as an executive with a non-profit organization in the American Indian community and leading innovative investment strategies in philanthropy that elevated the power of community led, culturally meaningful healing work has shown that when given the right skills and supports over time, community can create social norms of resilience. I recently completed a six-month, statewide landscaping project to identify the components of a community-based ecosystem of mental wellbeing. Equipping our youth with culturally and age-appropriate tools to train other young people on managing stress and healing from trauma was repeatedly cited as an urgent need. HF 2930 provides multiple avenues to advance communities capacity to lead on improving mental health and build resilience. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you;

Suzanne Koepplinger

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