



Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs

Representative Peter Fischer, Chair
Behavioral Health Policy Subdivision
MN House of Representatives
March 9, 2022

Chair Fischer and Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP), I am writing to convey our strong support for and urge the Committee to pass Representative Hanson's House File 3738 – policy changes and updates to Children's Therapeutic Supports Services (CTSS).

Minnesota Community Mental Health Programs' Perspective

The Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP) is the state's leading association for Community Mental Health Centers and Programs, representing 35 community-based mental health providers and agencies across the state. Our mission is to serve all who come to us seeking mental and chemical health services, regardless of their insurance status, ability to pay or where they live. Collectively, we serve over 200,000 Minnesota families, children and adults on public programs.

The proposal in HF 3738 incorporates collective work from a joint effort across community providers, schools, the Departments of Education and Human Services and the Governor's Children's Cabinet to increase access to children's mental health care. The workgroups formed under this effort developed recommendations across the multiple areas of children's mental health care access, including opportunities to streamline program environments, provider roles and reporting requirements. HF 3738's language is aligned with these recommendations, including working with the Department in developing a new broad children's mental health care benefit which can flex with the needs of our children and families.

In calendar years 2021 and 2022, our state's community behavioral health programs are struggling to maintain services under the ongoing pandemic and the extreme workforce crisis. The full impact of these forces is resulting in our mental health agencies not being able to keep programs open or keep up with our clients' growing needs for care. A critical sustainability challenge is in the ongoing regulatory and reporting requirements of public our behavioral health programs, including children's therapeutic supports services (CTSS). Currently, providers must spend a growing amount of their time and efforts complying with documentation, reporting and administrative requirements rather than focusing time on delivering high quality care to clients. Our providers are feeling the weight of this burden exponentially in this current workforce crisis – existing staff are working beyond 100% capacity to meet the growing needs of our communities, all while having to spend more time in reporting and documentation. We fear we are losing clinicians from the mental health field in part because of this. More so, our clients are feeling the weight, having to be referred to outside agencies or put on waiting lists because our providers cannot keep up with the growing communities' need and these administrative requirements. We are faced with more needs, the same high administrative burdens and less people to do it all.

MACMHP asks for the Committee's support in increasing access to CTSS services by passing HF 3738, which takes many steps toward removing significant regulatory barriers demanding/ taking much of providers time away from client care.

Thank you for considering our request. Please do not hesitate to reach out to jln.palen@macmhp.org with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely

Jin Lee Palen

Executive Director

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