



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

March 7, 2023

Re: MN HF 1858

To the members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

I am writing today on behalf of the YMCA of the North in support of legislation HF1858 to appropriate funds for the Safe Harbor shelter and housing grant program and services to support sexually exploited youth. The Safe Harbor program provides holistic support services to youth who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking. The Youth and Family Services team of the YMCA of the North is a current grantee and a valued partner to the State of Minnesota in providing these important services to a highly vulnerable youth population that is predominantly BIPOC and low income. On an annual basis, we support approximately 20 youth participants through our Safe Harbor services. This funding overall is critical to meet the needs of youth survivors or to prevent exploitation for youth at risk in our community.

We have partnered with the State of Minnesota over multiple bienniums on this important work and have seen the impact of Safe Harbor funding first-hand. The YMCA of the North believes that the Safe Harbor funding enables a community of caring service providers to deliver culturally responsive services, a strengths-based approach, and trauma-informed care to bring healing and hope to youth who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking. We believe that the Safe Harbor legislation is highly impactful due to the strong community relationships developed between the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, and other service delivery partners within the Safe Harbor network, including the YMCA of the North. We work in close coordination with allied service providers and professionals, schools, law enforcement, and other systems to overcome gaps and to end the sexual exploitation and trafficking of youth in our community.

Due to the high quality of services delivered to youth, the gaps in service that would exist without this funding, and the strength of the network of key partnerships and stakeholders engaged, we strongly encourage the passage and continuation of this legislation to appropriate funding for the Safe Harbor program. Thank you for your time and consideration of our letter of support.

Sincerely,

Kate Ray  
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