



# BASC

Working Together to Support Children and Families

Beltrami Area Service Collaborative  
Community Service Center  
616 America Avenue NW, Suite 160  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
Phone: 218-333-8190  
Fax: 218-333-8193

February 27, 2023

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is in regard to **HF 1712**. As the executive director of Beltrami Area Service Collaborative (BASC), I can attest to the vital importance of youth intervention programming. BASC is a Children's Mental Health and Family Service Collaborative serving Beltrami County in Northwestern Minnesota. Red Lake Nation and a small portion of Leech Lake Nation are located within the boundaries of our county.

BASC serves youth and families in several capacities. Of particular note, our Youth Intervention Program has operated with a restorative practice lens for more than twelve years. We work with first-time, lower-level juvenile offenders who are referred to our program by the County Attorney's Office as a diversion from court (pre-disposition). On average, 150 youth are referred annually and around 50% represent minority races.

Using state and other funding, BASC employs a full-time Youth Intervention Program Specialist who provides risk assessments, case management, routine assessments for mental health and substance use services, and evidence-based, restorative programming with parent/guardian involvement. Recidivism rates are calculated at six and twelve months after case closure, and at almost every reporting period, the benchmark goal has been exceeded by this program. We are disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, but the challenges are mounting.

BASC partners closely with all area schools, law enforcement, social services, public health, juvenile probation, behavioral health agencies, county attorney's office and the juvenile center. As such, we are definitely in-the-know about the unmet needs of our area youth.

Notably, our area schools are struggling to re-engage students in the wake of COVID. Our region has long been hard-hit by a mental health workforce shortage coupled with a high rate of childhood trauma, which leaves students responding to stressors in a maladaptive way. With additional funding, BASC and its partners could collaborate with schools to provide much-needed early intervention with at-risk students and their families.

Youth intervention work is, at its essence, relationship based. Funding for these programs has been stagnant, which leads to high workforce turnover. Every time a youth who has experienced trauma needs to learn to trust a *new* adult, their progress is interrupted and may come to a complete halt. If we want to attract and retain highly skilled youth-serving professionals, compensation must be competitive and additional funding is needed.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please contact me if you would like additional testimony.

Sincerely,

Wendy Kalass Thompson  
Executive Director

Beltrami Area Service Collaborative -- Bemidji, MN  
218-333-8194