



Ignite Afterschool
1400 Van Buren St NE Suite 203
Minneapolis, MN 55118

March 20th, 2023

Chair Liebling and member of the Committee,

Ignite Afterschool is Minnesota's statewide afterschool network made up of a variety of organizations that provide afterschool and summer learning programs for young people in grades K-12 across the state. Please accept this letter as our enthusiastic support for the inclusion of ***Adolescent Mental Health Promotion grant program in HF2930 (Article 2, Section 68)***. The Ignite Afterschool network believes that young people will benefit greatly from community-based opportunities to build mental health skills and experience peer support.

During the Covid-19 global pandemic, afterschool provider organizations joined with others to provide emergency support to young people and their families. Now, as we recover, these organizations continue support young people with youth development programming, social connection and mental health supports, and academic mentoring (see Ignite's [Yes to Success blog series](#)). Many of our afterschool partners report that mental health support is the number one need that young people in their programs and communities need right now. The ***Adolescent Mental Health Promotion grant program*** will provide critical resources to community organizations that are working with young people who face the most disparities in mental health services. Many youth programs are operated by youth development staff who are experts in creating positive, caring and culturally relevant spaces for young people but who are not licensed mental health professions. This funding can provide training and capacity building for youth development professionals to better build the mental health skills of young people. Many afterschool and summer programs also excel is creating opportunities for youth voice and leadership. This grant program will also allow for young people to support others through peer supports and group learning.

We urge the committee to support HF2930, especially Article 2, Section 68 which establishes the ***Adolescent Mental Health Promotion grant program***. This funding is critically important to create an ecosystem of supports for young people as they recover from the Covid-19 global pandemic. Thank you for your consideration and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions by emailing me at Kari@igniteafterschool.org.

Thank You,



Kari Denissen Cunnien, Executive Director