



January 23, 2024

Chair Fischer and the House Human Service Policy Committee,

Nexus Family Healing is a Minnesota based organization that provides mental health services across the continuum from high end residential care to statewide foster care and community based prevention and treatment services. We are acutely aware of the gaps in our system and the cost to our children, families and communities. The signs of a fractured and incomplete system of care are plentiful: youth are being stranded in emergency rooms and other inappropriate settings, families cannot find services when they face mental health challenges, youth who have completed treatment in high end settings cannot find the services they need to sustain their gains in the community.

We know you share our alarm at the rates of mental health distress in our young people and in our communities. The rate of youth reporting desperation, anxiety and hopelessness is well reported. Many of those youth and their families are falling into the gaps of our current system and have no way to receive the services and connection that will allow them to navigate a path to health and wellbeing.

Foundational to fixing our system of care is a Medicaid payment rate that allows nonprofits such as Nexus to meet the dire need of our communities and our state. As we face the same workforce and inflationary stressors of all industries, there is no current way to scale up community based mental health services to the level required. Nexus has had to scale back its community services, close programs and decline service cultivation due to the current rate levels. Other agencies have closed altogether.

We urge you and the Committee to place the Medicaid rate issue at the top of the priority list. The cost of inaction is already evident in the suicide rates of our youth and the overuse of detention and hospital settings. A rate repair will allow the sector to build the prevention and community mental health services that will create healing for families and bright futures for our youth and the state.

Thank you for your support of a robust mental health system as the critical investment needed by youth and families across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Margaret Vimont'.

Margaret Vimont, LCSW
Vice President of Growth and Community Services