



March 7, 2023

Representative Dave Pinto
Chair, Children & Families Policy & Finance Committee
200 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the Committee:

Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition (PN-3) writes in broad support of HF 1198, a family-centered children's mental health bill aimed at increasing access to urgently needed early intervention mental health services for children and families in Minnesota. The PN-3 Coalition is excited to see significant investments in Minnesota's youngest children, their families, and their caregivers. We believe public investments aimed at supporting healthy growth, development and learning will positively position children and families for a lifetime of prosperity.

The PN-3 Coalition supports the bill in its entirety but emphasizes the need for families to have timely access to infant and early childhood mental health care. A delay in mental health services may impact a baby's cognitive, emotional, and physical development for the rest of their lives as they are often growing in and out of critical developmental stages without the support needed to sustain healthy brain development. A brief mental health assessment of the baby during the family's first consultation appointment will allow families to access mental health services while their young child undergoes the lengthy and thorough mental health assessment.

Healthy child growth and development is stipulated on the bond between a child and their caregiver and the PN-3 Coalition believes supporting a caregiver's mental health uplifts the entire family. The time and resources spent arranging child care for young children is just one barrier inhibiting parents from accessing mental health services. This bill allows families receiving MFIP to access child care grants to allow parents to address their mental health without being forced to choose between their emotional health and their family's financial wellbeing.

In order to build and sustain a family-centered mental health continuum, families must have timely access to early intervention and community-based mental health services to address and support their child's mental health and wellbeing. Please join us in supporting HF 1198, to invest in what is already proven to help children and their families address their mental-health concerns and achieve well-being in the community.

Thank you,

Deb Fitzpatrick,
Children's Defense Funds-MN,
Co-Chair

Nancy Jost,
West Central Initiative,
Co-Chair

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn,
MN Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Coalition,
Coalition Coordinator