

February 6, 2023

Representative Tina Liebling
Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Liebling,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support for HF712, which expands access to reproductive health care for Minnesotans by funding community-based clinics.

For 40 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$45 million in organizations across the state, and advanced policies to create a state where women, girls, and their families can thrive. Women are at the center of families and are often the primary caretakers of their households. When women have access to safe and affordable reproductive healthcare services, they have better outcomes for healthy lives and pathways to prosperity.

Our research with the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School shows that access to reproductive health care is not truly available for many patients in Minnesota. Lack of access to care has significant consequences for the people most affected, especially our most marginalized Minnesotans – Black, Indigenous, refugees and immigrants, rural, and people with lower incomes. For example, the 10 counties with the highest teen birth rates are all in Greater Minnesota where youth face more difficulties accessing sexual health clinics due to barriers, including fewer clinics, longer distances to travel, limited hours of operation, and confidentiality/privacy concerns. Of all rural Minnesota counties, 47% have no sexual health clinic.

The funding in this bill for Family Planning grants is essential to creating more access across the state for better outcomes. The Department of Health's report on this program indicates that the health care providers across the state who receive these funds are making a difference. In 2022, they counseled 19,558 individuals on reproductive life planning and contraceptive options and provided 15,485 people with a range of family planning method services. And yet the gaps in care persist. Additional funds are needed to create access for more Minnesotans.

Reproductive health care creates economic opportunities, including the ability to fulfill educational dreams, start a business, and grow a career. Without it, women cannot make decisions that are in the best interests of their children, their families, and themselves. Research on economic disparities shows that families thrive when women and girls are healthy and well.

Living a safe and healthy life in Minnesota must include access to reproductive health care. Additional funding for this important program will expand access through community-based clinics for patients across the state. We urge inclusion of HF714 in the committee's budget bill to make Minnesota a place where women, girls, and gender-expansive people from all backgrounds across the state can thrive.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez

President & CEO

Women's Foundation of Minnesota