



January 24, 2024

To: Members of the House Human Services Policy Committee

Dear Chair Fischer and Committee Members,

LSS is a statewide provider of essential services serving one in 63 Minnesotans every year. In 2023, LSS Behavioral Health provided support to more than 3,000 people through in-person and telehealth therapy visits and through employer, school, and shelter-linked mental health partnerships. As a statewide community-based provider, we know all too well that maintaining access to mental health care for our neighbors requires immediate investment in rates for community-based mental health services.

We request that the DHS Medicaid Outpatient Mental Health Rates Study findings lead to critical action during the 2024 legislative session, so that community-based mental health providers can continue to provide and grow essential support and services across Minnesota.

We pride ourselves on working with anyone who contacts us and connecting them to a continuum of integrated services that reflect compassion, integrity, and respect. However, providers, including LSS, are experiencing multiple challenges to meet the mental health needs of Minnesotans. Challenges include years of operating with reimbursement rates far below the true cost of service and a severe shortage of well-qualified and licensed mental health providers. Further, these challenges are compounded with an increase in demand for services and people seeking services with highly complex and acute care needs.

LSS sustains mental health services, because we know mental health is a foundation for health and well-being. We remain committed to maintaining this access across the state and significantly subsidize these services to protect access for all who come through our doors regardless of the type of insurance they have or how they will pay for services. However, this is an unsustainable model for those with the greatest need.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight the needs of the families and communities we support and the drastic need to invest in mental health services. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org, if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrice O'Leary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrice" being the most prominent.

Patrice O'Leary
Associate Vice President, Family Services, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota