



Representative Mohamud Noor, Chair
Human Services Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
February 9, 2023
Dear Chair and Committee Members

On behalf of Vail Place, I am sending this letter to support Representative Bierman's House File 564 – increase funding to the school-linked mental health program.

Vail Place is a nonprofit organization that provides community-based recovery services for adults with serious mental illnesses.

Vail Place supports in solidarity with our partners of mental health professionals/ therapists within our schools. We also support by providing:

- services for parents of students living with mental illness
- services for early adults transitioning into the community

The school-linked mental health grant allows our partners to work with school staff, coordinate care, deliver services to students without insurance or with very high out of pocket expenses. This grant allows our partners to serve children and families beyond the walls of our clinic sites. This flexibility helps client's greatly. By its nature, School-Linked Mental Health was designed to remove barriers students had to accessing mental health support. The service specifically focuses on serving children and families who are otherwise not able to access mental health. Not surprisingly, with the onset of the pandemic, barriers only became more significant for children and families who were School-Linked Mental Health clients.

We increasingly see the mental health needs of children and families are spiking as they are dealing with the trauma of the pandemic and the countless unanswered questions about how to maintain economic stability, personal safety and a sense of future. As needs are spiking in community life, capacity to meet those needs is increasingly imperiled. Prior to and exacerbated by COVID, the greatest challenges for providers is recruitment and retention of mental health counselors. Providers are seeking all lifelines for a more durable solution that will allow them to prepare to deliver critical mental health support. The School-linked mental health program is a key component of our community mental health care system. Please support increasing funding to the program and House File 564.

Thank you for your consideration and support of the mental health needs of our children and families.

Sincerely,

Karina Forrest Perkins
President and Executive Director

"I feel very cared for at Vail Place"
– Carla, Vail Place Clubhouse Member

"The sense of community, that I'm not alone in this. What I like most is it helps me to talk to other people and it's validating that we're all in this together."
– Vail Place Clubhouse Member

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