



March 11, 2024

Chair Stephenson and Committee Members
House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee

RE: Support for HF4396 – Clarifying the Essential Community Provider program

The Essential Community Provider (ECP) designation was established in Minnesota in 1994. The designation recognizes that providers that serve high-risk, special needs, and underserved individuals are essential to communities across Minnesota. They are located in urban and rural communities and include Hennepin Healthcare, Gillette Children's, Children's Minnesota, mental health clinics, community action programs and others ([full list here](#)). ECPs are required to:

- Provide or coordinate supportive and stabilizing services, such as transportation, child care, linguistic services, and culturally sensitive and competent services to its clients.
- Have processes for identifying a need for supportive and stabilizing services and for enabling clients to access these services.
- Maintain nonprofit status or be statutorily designated, be committed to the population served, and not restrict access or services because of a client's financial limitations.

To receive and maintain this designation, ECPs have to submit annual reports to the Minnesota Department of Health and undertake an extensive renewal process every five years. These processes ensure ECPs are serving the populations required and providing the supportive and stabilizing services communities rely on.

In turn, ECPs are to be offered a contract to be in-network in all health plan products regulated by the state. However, there are times when a contract hasn't been offered or, when one is offered, it includes reimbursement rates that are wholly insufficient.

We support HF4396 because it clarifies the current ECP law to ensure contracts with reasonable rates are being offered for all state-regulated insurance products. We have been working with the bill author and state agencies on the right language to provide that clarity and look forward to continuing those conversations as this bill moves through the process.

Clarifying these requirements will allow us to realize the promise of our state's ECP law, where Minnesotans have access to health care services delivered by essential providers in their communities.



March 8, 2024

Dear Members of the House Commerce Committee:

NAMI Minnesota is writing in support of HF4396 which would require health plans to include in their network all providers meeting the essential community provider requirements.

The essential community providers address the needs for people from culturally specific communities and people whose income may be too high for Medicaid and could benefit from a sliding fee schedule. These providers are required to address barriers to care such as transportation or childcare. They are required to provide culturally informed services.

They play a huge role in providing treatment for persons with serious and persistent mental illness and children with severe emotional disturbances. Many of Minnesota's community mental health centers and certified community behavioral health centers are essential community providers.

Regardless of their health plan, Minnesotans who need the care provided by essential community providers should be able to access them. We have long believed that plans were required to include ALL essential community providers in their geographic area and were surprised to hear that all are not included. Please support HF 4396 to ensure access to necessary care for people who are already underserved in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue", written over a white background.

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director



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