

On behalf of the five Ely area agencies that comprise the Pathways to Wellness hub and spoke model, I am writing to express our support for the Community Health Worker (CHW) line item in the Governor’s Supplemental Budget to educate, strengthen, equip, evaluate, and grow the CHW Workforce.

CHWs were a valuable component of the Ely community being an early implementor of the State Innovation Model in 2014-2017 and they remain a key to addressing social determinants of health and behavioral health needs. Pathways to Wellness is proud to have two CHWs embedded in our Essentia Health clinic and three additional CHWs in area nonprofits.

Essentia Health has taken this CHW based model and piloted it in primary care clinics from Duluth to Detroit Lakes. Essentia Health currently has 10 CHWs in 8 clinics and is exploring ways to expand this model as part of its work to respond to the opioid and behavioral health crises. CHWs connect patients to resources such as food, housing, mental health services, transportation, health insurance and treatment programs. CHWs are valued members of their Essentia Health primary care team addressing complex needs.

Not only do CHWs in the Ely area and Essentia Health improve health and wellness for patients, physicians in primary care clinic s with a CHW call this role a “game changer.” Comments like “… takes a load off of me as a busy family doctor” show CHWs benefit the care team by connecting patients to the non-medical aspects of care. Recent research studies have demonstrated a potential link between clinician burnout and the ability to address patients’ social needs.

CHWs’ work is trauma-informed and they are uniquely positioned to improve health outcomes and health equity within our state. This funding will lead to increased healthcare access, lower healthcare costs and improved health outcomes for your constituents facing health inequities and barriers to care. Additionally, this bill will further support and grow the CHW workforce.

The Pathways to Wellness agencies of Essentia Health-Ely Clinic, Well Being Development, Ely Community Resource and St. Anthony’s Catholic Church respectfully urge you to support the funding for CHWS in the Governor’s Budget. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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*Care Team Leader*

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