



Mental Health Minnesota is the voice of lived mental health experience.

We carry that declaration forward as we work to advance mental health and well-being for all, increase access to mental health treatment and services, and provide education, resources and support across Minnesota.

February 15, 2022

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

I write today to convey Mental Health Minnesota's support of HF1083 – Comprehensive school mental health service lead position established, and money appropriated.

The proposed legislation would add two lead positions within the Department of Education to support and focus on the mental health of students, teachers and staff.

Mental Health Minnesota provides free, anonymous online mental health screenings on its website. Since the pandemic began, screenings on the website have skyrocketed, with more than 50,000 online mental health screenings completed on Mental Health Minnesota's website between March 2020 and December 2021. Even more alarming: 37% of the online mental health screenings completed during the pandemic were from those under the age of 18.

The number of screenings completed by youth under age 18 has increased faster than adults, with 10,267 completed in 2021 compared to just 1,708 in 2019...a 500% increase. In addition, children and youth under age 18 have been more likely to score in the "severe" range for the symptoms they are experiencing for both anxiety and depression.

The vast majority of these children and youth (65%) say that they have never been diagnosed by a mental health provider or received treatment or support at any time in the past. Given the severity of the symptoms children and youth are reporting through these screenings, it is essential that we ensure access to treatment, services and support that can help them address mental health concerns and avoid crisis.

School-linked mental health services have been incredibly important as we work to help children and youth address their mental health concerns, and continuing education for teachers regarding mental illness and suicide intervention has also been a key step forward. But we can and should do so much more to provide resources and tools to schools. Creating these lead positions would be another essential step in addressing the mental health needs of students, teachers and staff in schools across Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Shannah C. Mulvihill, MA, CFRE
Executive Director