



**An association of resources and advocacy for children, youth and families**  
[www.aspiremn.org](http://www.aspiremn.org)

March 21, 2026

Dear Co-Chair Backer, Co-Chair Bierman and Members of Health Finance and Policy,

AspireMN is a statewide association of children and family serving organizations with delivery of care in children's mental health, child welfare, and a variety of service models oriented to provide early intervention for families, meet critical needs and promote family preservation.

We are grateful for the strong leadership from this committee in advancing solutions for children who experience boarding in hospitals, detention or with counties – by addressing the systemic needs for children to access the right care at the right intensity at the right time. HF4379 is a policy-only proposal that improves access to key elements of the children's mental health and including decreasing barriers to intensive service models, including policy improvements for:

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation by codifying grant language into statute to enhance accountability and transparency in service delivery
- Supports prudent parenting standards to care for children with acute needs requiring residential levels of care
- Children's Therapeutic Supports and Services (CTSS) continued alignment with the full mental health continuum, and, supporting direct access to skill building therapy
- Youth ACT updates for practice and workforce needs to support greater use of this excellent and intensive service model by children and youth with acute need

We encourage support for HF4379 to address continued needed policy improvements for our children's mental health continuum in service to children and families as they seek to access needed treatment to live their best lives in community.

Warm regards,

Kirsten Anderson  
Executive Director

**AspireMN improves the lives of children, youth and families served by member organizations through support for quality service delivery, leadership development and policy advocacy.**



March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Co-Chair Bierman  
Co-Chair Backer  
Members of the Health and Finance and Policy Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Co-Chair Bierman, Co-Chair Backer, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Nexus Family Healing, we strongly support HF4379, legislation that strengthens access to children's mental health services and addresses the growing crisis of children boarding in hospitals or detention due to a lack of appropriate care. This bill makes meaningful, practical improvements that help children receive timely, community-based mental health support.

HF4379 promotes prevention and early intervention by codifying the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grant, ensuring continued support for early identification, skill development, and sustained access to childcare. The bill also removes barriers for children with the most acute needs by establishing a prudent parenting standard in group homes, better aligning care with children's developmental and therapeutic needs. In addition, it improves consistency across community-based mental health services by clarifying skills group size standards and allowing direct access to skills training, reducing delays that can exacerbate mental health crises.

Finally, HF4379 strengthens the continuum of care by updating Youth Assertive Community Treatment (Youth ACT), expanding the impact of this proven, team-based model that helps children with acute mental health needs remain safely in their homes and communities. Nexus Family Healing urges your support for HF4379 and thanks you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota's children and families.

Sincerely,

*Christopher D. Kokal*

Christopher Kokal  
Senior Director of Growth and Advocacy  
Nexus Family Healing





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March 20, 2026

ATTN: Co-Chair Bierman, Co-Chair Backer and Committee Members

I am writing on behalf of Fernbrook Family Center as a request that you support **HF4379**. This bill would be instrumental in building capacity and infrastructure to provide mental health services to kids and families in Minnesota.

The needs of kids and families have increased significantly and the lack of access to mental health services is putting them at great risk. Provider shortages and burnout are problematic and worsening.

This bill would eliminate unnecessary barriers and would make it easier for children to access services more timely and more consistently. Fernbrook Family Center provides services using the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Grant and these services are vital for our early childhood providers. This would codify the requirements and structure in statute, which would align all providers.

Fernbrook Family Center provides skills training in all 12 of our locations. This service has prevented countless children from requiring a higher level of care and has provided life saving mental health services to children and families.

We ask that you vote to support **HF4379** during the hearing on March 23, 2026!

Thank you!

Shannon Brown, MS, LPCC

Chief Executive Officer

Fernbrook Family Center

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To: Co-Chair Bierman, Co-Chair Backer and Members of the Health and Finance and Policy Committee

Date: March 20, 2026

RE: HF4379

FROM: Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW – Executive Director

*Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW*

Dear Honorable Co-Chair Bierman, Co-Chair Backer and Members of the Health and Finance and Policy Committee

I am writing to encourage your support for HF4379, which takes important steps to strengthen access to critical children's mental health services in Minnesota. Families across our state are facing a growing crisis as children with significant mental health needs struggle to access timely, appropriate care. When services are unavailable, children often end up boarding in hospitals or entering detention settings simply because the right supports do not exist in the community. HF4379 offers meaningful solutions that will help address these gaps.

One key provision of this bill codifies the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grant. This program plays a vital role in supporting early identification of mental health needs, building skills among caregivers and educators, and sustaining access to child care environments where children can thrive. By strengthening early intervention, we can address challenges before they escalate into more serious crises.

HF4379 also removes barriers that prevent highly acute children from receiving appropriate care in group home settings. Establishing a prudent parenting standard allows caregivers in these environments to make everyday decisions that support normalcy, safety, and stability for the children in their care. This change helps ensure that children with complex needs can still experience supportive, developmentally appropriate environments.

The bill further improves alignment across community-based mental health services by consistently defining skills group size. This clarity helps providers deliver services more effectively and ensures programs can operate in ways that meet children's needs while maintaining high-quality standards.

Another important provision allows direct access to skills training for managing mental health symptoms. Removing unnecessary barriers to this type of support enables children



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and families to receive practical tools sooner, helping them stabilize and succeed in home, school, and community settings.

Finally, the bill updates Youth ACT to expand the reach and effectiveness of this team-based service model. Youth ACT teams provide intensive, coordinated care for young people with acute mental health needs, helping them remain safely in their communities rather than entering more restrictive or institutional settings.

Together, these provisions strengthen Minnesota's continuum of children's mental health care—from early identification and prevention to intensive community-based services. Supporting HF4379 will help reduce hospital boarding, prevent unnecessary involvement with detention systems, and ensure that children receive the care they need in the least restrictive and most supportive environments possible.

Thank you for your commitment to the well-being of Minnesota's children and families. I urge you to support HF4379 and continue investing in solutions that expand access to timely, effective mental health care.