



May 11, 2021

To: Members of the 2021 Health and Human Services Conference Committee

Re: HF2128/SF2360 Health and Human Services Omnibus Budget Bill – Support for Culturally Informed Behavioral Health Training Requirements and Culturally Diverse Workforce Development

Dear Chair Lieblich, Chair Benson and Members of the HHS Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's (LSS) support of proposals in House File 2128 related to culturally informed behavioral health training requirements and culturally diverse workforce development support**, a bill originally carried by Senator Utke (SF 1362) and Representative Vang (HF 970).

LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees serving 300 communities. LSS provides care that reflects compassion, integrity, and respect for all individuals from a comprehensive, strength-based approach. We believe that behavioral health builds the foundation for health and well-being and our services provide individuals and families with critical access to mental health care in communities across the state, regardless of their ability to pay for services, often in areas with few options for access to these services.

While demand for these services has grown, there is still a behavioral health workforce shortage. This is particularly true amongst culturally informed and diverse professionals who are from communities that face barriers to accessing care. LSS supports proposals that eliminate systemic barriers and diversify our workforce to better meet the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The following would further diversify and expand our mental health workforce through increased investment in education and training that enable more BIPOC students to enter the behavioral health field:

- Health insurance coverage for mental health treatment provided by clinical trainees.
- Mental health licensing boards comprised of members that represent the geographical, racial, and cultural diversity of the state, including disability.
- Four hours of culturally informed continuing education.
- Expansion of the definition of "mental health practitioner" to include a student who is completing a practicum or internship.



- Allowance of DHS grants to fund cultural healers.
- Funding for BIPOC mental health professionals to become supervisors.
- Establishment of a Culturally Informed and Culturally Responsive Mental Health Task Force.
- Creation of workgroups to address barriers in the current professional licensure process, consider an alternative licensure pathway while maintaining high quality care and to look at providing supervision across the different licenses to help address supervisor shortages in Greater Minnesota.

These proposals are the critical first steps needed to ensure that our workforce and mental health care system are meeting the needs of Minnesota's diverse communities by creating equitable pathways to the profession. Thank you for your consideration and support of these provisions in HF 2128. LSS is thankful for your thoughtful leadership and support. If we can be of service or provide additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trevor B. Johnson".

Trevor B. Johnson, MSW, LICSW
Senior Director of Behavioral Health Services
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
trevor.johnson@lssmn.org
612-879-5317

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "jeru gobeze".

Jeru Gobeze, MSW, LGSW
Advocacy Manager
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
jeru.gobeze@lssmn.org
651-341-0278