

February 6, 2023

Dear Representative Youakim and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

At Volunteers of America of Minnesota (VOA of MN) we are deeply committed to serving children, youth, and families with services that meet their unique needs. VOA of MN operates three children's residential treatment facilities in the state of Minnesota for children and adolescents who have histories of significant trauma and struggle with serious mental illness. Over the years, we have helped thousands of children return to stability after trauma and crisis.

Today we are writing in support of **HF795** which would provide extended time revenue to school districts that educate students at residential treatment facilities providing mental health or juvenile justice services. This bill would ensure that school districts can provide extended time academic support to our residents to help them return to stability and a successful life in community. Prioritizing mental health should not come at the expense of meeting their educational needs.

One in five young people experience a mental health problem during their school years. For millions of children, treatment can transform lives - but not nearly enough have access to care. At Volunteers of America of Minnesota, we are working to close this gap. It is widely acknowledged that youth with mental illnesses and their families need access to the right level of mental health treatment at the right time including, when appropriate, residential treatment services. At the core of our "never give up" approach is a belief that all youth have the ability to reach their full potential. Your support of HF795 is greatly needed and appreciated, and its passage will promote efforts to ensure all children and adolescents have educational stability and support that meet their needs.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and public service on behalf of children, youth, and families. Please do not hesitate to contact me at Julie.Manworren@voamn.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Julie Manworren
President and CEO