



Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs

Representative Jennifer Schultz, Chair
Human Services Policy and Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
February 24, 2021

Dear Chair Schultz and Committee Members

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP), I am sending this letter to support Representative Vang's House File 970 - Culturally informed behavioral health training requirements and culturally diverse workforce development support.

The Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP) is the state's leading association for Community Mental Health Programs, representing 33 community-based mental health providers and agencies across the state. Collectively, we serve over 200,000 Minnesota families, children and adults. Our mission is to serve all who come to us seeking mental and chemical health services, regardless of their insurance status, ability to pay or where they live. As Essential Community Providers, we serve primarily culturally diverse, low-income, uninsured and public healthcare program insured Minnesotans, who cannot access services elsewhere. We serve our clients with comprehensive, coordinated care and love.

Mental health programs' staff are key/ critical to our ability to provide high quality care to our clients and communities. Our entire behavioral health system is facing a workforce crisis, with more providers retiring than are coming into the field. The shortage is particularly true for our communities of color, whose members face even more barriers to accessing care and inequities. MACMHP supports HF 970's proposal to further diversify our workforce through more diversity training and increased funding/ investment into education and training supports to allow more students and workers from communities of color to enter the mental health workforce.

Specifically, and most importantly to MACMHP, the bill –

- convenes a workgroup to address barriers in the current professional licensure process and consider an alternative licensure pathway.
- expands the definition of a mental health practitioner to include students completing internships while in their programs (graduate or undergraduate). This way students, particularly non-traditional students with families and children, do not have to choose between completing their degree and making wages to provide for their families. This also allows our community mental and chemical health agencies to hire more mental health practitioners, under a wider net of eligibility.

All the proposals in HF 970 are a first step, but an important first step, to bringing more diverse staff candidates into the mental and chemical health fields. Thank you for your consideration and support of the mental health care needs of our diverse communities and our mental health care system in Minnesota. Please support House File 970.

Sincerely

Jin Lee Palen
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs | MACMHP