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February 16, 2023

ATTN: House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

I am writing on behalf of Fernbrook Family Center as a request that you support **HF1198**. 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. Many times clients are entering the system during a crisis (suicide attempt, drug overdose, running away, violence at school, assault of family member or peer, etc.) and providers are scrambling to get them into services as quickly as possible to stabilize the situation.

In my 12+ years in this field I have seen early intervention work. It saves lives and it saves money. This bill provides infrastructure to increase our capacity to do just that by allowing us to coordinate care across various providers, increase training for our in-home providers, increase pay for our in-home providers, increase School Linked Mental Health capacity, and a variety of other things. I have seen these services work, but they need investment to create sustainability.

We recently had an internal consultation on a 12 year old client who was admitted to the Emergency Department for an assault towards a caregiver. We pulled all of our available resources and were able to get this client a diagnostic assessment quickly so they could qualify for CTSS in-home skills and therapy to support the kid and family, a case manager to assist with connecting to other resources, and a School Linked Mental Health therapist to support the kid in that setting. I believe this will prevent the child from experiencing further hospitalizations or criminal charges and correctional services involvement. In the long run this is best for the child, the family, and tax payers.

While these services are incredibly effective and necessary, it is difficult to sustain them. The individuals in these positions are working with our most difficult and vulnerable clients and they require additional training, supervision, and support. They are also working long and difficult hours and are not compensated with additional pay. Supporting this bill would provide the necessary funding to sustain these important programs we have seen change the lives of kids and families in Minnesota.

We ask that you vote to support **HF1198** during the hearing on February 20, 2023!

Thank you!

Shannon Brown, MS, LPCC

Chief Executive Officer

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