

March 6, 2023

Chair Peter Fischer  
551 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Vice Chair Luke Frederick  
487 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Fischer and Vice Chair Frederick,

My name is Anne Emerson, I am a person in recovery, who struggled with a substance use disorder, and also someone who has lost a loved one to a fentanyl overdose. I thank you for the opportunity to lend my voice in today's hearing on the psychiatric Collaborative Care Model.

I strongly support the implementation of the Collaborative Care Model (CoMC), and urge your committee to pass the bill HF771. I believe this bill could have lifesaving impacts on individuals and families who experience substance use disorder.

I struggled with meth use for many years, it affected every aspect of my life, including my physical and mental health. I needed help not only for my substance use but also for the anxiety and depression that lead me to my drug use. Getting sober was a struggle, trying to find the right help felt like an even bigger struggle. As a person who was an emotional user, I didn't have months to sit on a waiting list, waiting to get help with my mental health issues, I needed it at the same time I was receiving help for my substance use.

A person is sent from their primary physician to a mental health physician, where the wait time to be seen is months away. For many, that waiting time is very dangerous, costing the lives of many.

For me, the wait seemed like an eternity. After 3 months of waiting, I was finally able to get the mental health help I needed, with the right therapist. I was making great progress, but my visits lasted only for a few months. My therapist went out on her own, and despite her filing all necessary paperwork and filing multiple appeals, my state insurance denied payment and denied all appeals for me to

continue receiving care there. It left me in a very vulnerable, helpless spot. I was newly sober, trying to fix my life, and then I lost my fiancée to a fentanyl overdose. I lost progress, progress I would have been able to keep had there been a Collaborative Care Model.

Today, by the grace of God, I have been in recovery for 5 years. I am a certified peer recovery support specialist, I work full time as a Mental Health Specialist, and I am an ambassador for Shatterproof. Recovery is possible, and even more so when you have a team working together to save lives.

The stigma of substance use, and mental health come not only from society but also from being denied the proper care and treatment. I strongly urge you to please pass bill HF771, not only will it save lives, and save families from the devastation of losing a loved one but it will allow people to heal by receiving the help they so desperately need.

Thank you again for the opportunity to lend my voice.

Sincerely,

Anne Emerson

Coon Rapids, MN