

Dear Chair Abeler and Committee Members,

Woodland Centers is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center located in west-central Minnesota. We serve the following 7 counties, as well as others from the surrounding area: Meeker, Kandiyohi, Renville, Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, Big Stone and Swift. I am writing to ask for your support of SF 3010--behavioral health homes rate structure.

Woodland Centers has had a certified Behavioral Health Home (BHH) since 2015. Our BHH ensures improved access through coordinated care with primary care, behavioral health and social needs for children, families and adults.

We currently have 78 clients enrolled in our BHH program, ranging in age from 7 to 74. We are dedicated to helping clients achieve and/or maintain wellness. Studies show that individuals living with a serious mental illness in the United States have an average life expectancy of 54 years. While suicide accounts for about 10% of that figure, the real barrier for folks is accessing services. You and I know that going to the doctor is helpful. Doctors help identify early warning signs of chronic conditions that we can take action on and positively affect long-term outcomes. Someone with significant anxiety, for example, is very afraid of what they might find out at a doctor visit, and that individual is much more likely to ignore warning signs and not seek medical care until symptoms are so significant they warrant emergency room care. Not only is ER care costly to the system, it is not equipped to provide long-term care to folks.

My staff will work with clients to help them establish meaningful relationships with primary care providers. We help to set up appointments and transportation to those appointments. We offer to meet clients at the appointment if they would like the extra support, and we can act as a liaison between the client and their providers. We also help ensure that clients follow up with provider recommendations. And, we work to ensure that all involved in a client's care are kept informed about how the client is doing.

Woodland Centers supports this bill (SF3010) because the current rate structure does not cover the cost to employ the staff required to carry out the services. Based on an analysis of our current reimbursement vs cost of delivery, we anticipate that we will fall short \$107 per unit of service delivered, with an estimated loss of \$87,306.25 for 2022. Obviously, the current reimbursement will not sustain the program.

**We know the model of care works! But we need the payment for BHH to be more accurate to the cost of providing the service.** This is more important now than ever as we struggle to meet the rapidly growing mental health needs of our communities during this workforce and sustainability crisis.

We believe the rate proposal in SF 3010 will improve BHH access to more clients each year. A new sustainable payment for BHHs is a major step in keeping providers from continuing to lose money providing this service and being forced to consider closing it.

We ask for your support of this bill to strengthen access to this very important piece of our mental health services continuum.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Karen Oswood  
Director of Integrated Care

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