



Senator Jim Abeler, Chair
Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota State Senate
March 22, 2022

Chair Abeler and Members of the Committee

On behalf of Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center, I am writing to convey our strong support for and urge the Committee to pass Senator Nelson's Senate File 3690 – policy changes and updates to Children's Therapeutic Supports Services (CTSS).

Minnesota Community Mental Health Perspective

Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center is a Community Mental Health Center in Southeastern MN. We are a CTSS provider in Goodhue, Winona, Fillmore, Houston and Wabasha Counties. We are the leader in providing school based behavioral health services and in the region as well as community (non-school based) CTSS services.

The proposal in SF 3690 incorporates collective work from a joint effort across community providers, schools, the Departments of Education and Human Services and the Governor's Children's Cabinet to increase access to children's mental health care. The workgroups formed under this effort developed recommendations across the multiple areas of children's mental health care access, including opportunities to streamline program environments, provider roles and reporting requirements. While the work under these workgroups continues, SF 3690 language is aligned with their discussions and recommendations.

In calendar years 2021 and 2022, our state's community behavioral health programs are struggling to maintain services under the ongoing pandemic and the extreme workforce crisis. The full impact of these forces is resulting in our mental health agencies not being able to keep programs open or keep up with our clients' growing needs for care. A critical sustainability challenge is in the ongoing regulatory and reporting requirements of public behavioral health programs, including children's therapeutic supports services (CTSS).

Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center is experiencing:

- Workforce shortage
- Documentation burdens
- Supervision challenges
- Impact to clients' access to services; growing waitlists for services due to regulatory burdens and increase in demand

We are faced with more needs, the same immense administrative burdens and less people to do it all.



Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center asks for the Committee's support in increasing access to CTSS services by passing SF 3690, which takes many steps toward removing significant regulatory barriers demanding/ taking much of providers' time away from client care.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely

Erik Sievers, MSW, MBA
Executive Director
Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center