



MARCH 21, 2022

SENATOR JIM ABELER, CHAIR

HUMAN SERVICES REFORM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

MN STATE SENATE

Dear Chair Abeler and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Woodland Centers, I am writing to convey our support for and urge the Committee to pass Senator Nelson's **Senate File 3690 – policy changes and updates to Children's Therapeutic Support Services (CTSS)**.

Minnesota Community Mental Health Perspective

Woodland Centers is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) comprehensive community mental health center established in 1958. We serve seven rural counties in the west central region of Minnesota. Woodland Centers BHH services served over 100 individuals in 2021 ranging in age from 6 to 79. The program provided over 880 services in 2021 that helped clients coordinate care across providers, increase compliance with medical and behavioral health recommendations, and reduce recidivism of higher levels of care (including ERs, inpatient hospitalization, and detoxification).

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 within these workgroups continues, SF 3690 language is aligned with their discussions and recommendations.

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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 our behavioral health programs, including children's therapeutic supports services (CTSS).


Woodland Centers has faced significant workforce shortages across our CTSS services with over seven open positions at this time. We have waiting lists in every school district that we provide services in and in our homebased CTSS program. These waiting lists are in excess of 100 children and families. Since the pandemic there have been families that have waited over a year to access needed services in our CTSS programs due to lack of staff. In addition, our staff are required to complete excessive amounts of documentation every day which reduces the time to provide care to clients. This means that even when we have staff, a significant amount of time is taken to complete paperwork instead of providing direct care services to clients in need.

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

Woodland Centers 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 that demand much of our providers' time.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely

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Ashley Kjos, Psy.D., L.P.

Chief Executive Officer

Woodland Centers