



March 21, 2022

Committee Chair and Committee Members

Wellness in the Woods was founded in 2013 as a replacement for the former consumer network in Minnesota. Since that humble beginning, the staff has grown to 42 team members from across geographic and cultural communities. Team members, all of whom identify as living in either mental health, substance use recovery or co-occurring challenges work for wages comparable to their peer counterparts in the mental health and substance use support system.

Team members are certified as peer specialists and/or certified recovery specialists to provide statewide support through the Peer Support Connection Warmline from 5pm-9am every day-funded through the MN Dept of Human Services, the Virtual Peer Support Network which offers diverse programming from 10am-4pm 365 days a year via zoom or phone access. In addition, team members provide mental health training and advocacy through local and state level councils.

All peer support services are offered at no cost to the participants served which in 2021 was approximately 25,000 interactions. Participants are not required to meet eligibility guidelines other than the request for support.

SF3817 will expand the opportunity to support individuals who are experiencing life challenges through the use of preventative “upstream” peer support which is an evidence-based practice identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Strategic plans include enhanced support to individuals in substance use recovery, individuals who have experienced trauma, individuals who are released from corrections as well as geographic areas where access to resources are extremely limited.

Wellness in the Woods is honored to offer vocational opportunities to team members who have been impacted by their life challenges and are now important pieces to the workforce. Staff retention is 84% and starting wages begin at \$16.25 /hour for virtual telephone support.

Thank you for your support of SF 3817.

Jode Freyholtz-London

Jode Freyholtz-London

Executive Director- Wellness in the Woods