

March 11, 2022

Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing in support of the funding for Youth Intervention Programs in SF 3368 and SF 2989. Youth have experienced extraordinary challenges to their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rates of anxiety and depression in youth have risen across the nation, as have attempted suicides and visits to emergency rooms for mental health concerns. In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory and call to action to address the youth mental health crisis we are facing. Children in Minnesota are no exception. The challenges of the pandemic have also reduced and strained the available resources to support our children. As we see day treatment providers and inpatient beds close around our state, the support that Youth Intervention Programs provide is essential in bridging gaps for our youth.

Too often our incomplete children's mental health system leads to the criminalization of youth with mental illnesses and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Funding these programs supports youth and families in some of the most vulnerable situations to avoid unnecessary criminal justice involvement and collateral consequences for years to come. Thank you for hearing these important bills and supporting these investments in the mental health of youth.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Elliot Butay
Criminal Justice Coordinator