

March 13, 2023

Representative Sandra Feist
409 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Rep. Feist:

I am writing to express my full support and excitement for the St. Anthony Community Wellness Center project and urge you to include funding for this project in the bonding bill currently under consideration in St. Paul.

As a long-time resident of New Brighton, I have witnessed the growth of our area, and with it, the growth of our community assets. There are many examples of community gathering and wellness opportunities if you're willing to travel. This is absent from the St. Anthony Village area - an area surrounded by St. Paul, Minneapolis, Columbia Heights, New Brighton, and Roseville.

During my 40 years as a teacher and 20 years as Athletic Director in the St. Anthony-New Brighton school district, I have many specific experiences of the importance of physical activity in the lives of our students, both in terms of their physical and mental health. However, with the increasing population - and diversity - of our area, the need for space for these activities has grown faster than our ability to keep up.

The addition of a wellness center would be a tremendous asset for our community, providing much-needed space for students and community members to engage in physical activity and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This facility would also benefit our youth, who would have access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities to help them perform at their best while connecting to caring adults. We frequently have to adjust limited gym schedules to accommodate all groups, especially during the winter months, which can put our athletic teams at a disadvantage.

This facility time crunch also means community groups do not have access to needed facilities, although the demand continues to grow. The addition of space would provide the ability to have more teams practicing in parallel, and diminish the need to prioritize between high school teams, booster groups, and other community organizations - including opportunities to connect senior citizens with our youth! The new space would benefit everyone and provide for increased and more convenient access.

I strongly believe that investing in the St. Anthony Community Wellness Center is a wise decision that would bring significant benefits to our community for years to come. The requested funding in the bonding bill would help alleviate the financial burden on our community and allow us to create a space that promotes health, wellness, and community engagement.

Therefore, I urge you to support the St. Anthony Community Wellness Center project and include \$8 million in funding for this project in the upcoming bonding bill. I am confident that this project would be a valuable addition to our community, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gary Palm
166 Windsor Court
New, Brighton, MN 55112