



MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

March 13, 2023

Chair Melissa Wiklund
Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate

RE: SF1747 (Frentz) Minnesota State University, Mankato Community Behavioral Health Center appropriation

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee members,

The Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) supports SF 1747 and the development of a community behavioral health center and training clinic through the Center for Rural Behavioral Health at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The need exists for comprehensive, culturally specific, trauma-informed, practice- and evidence-based, person- and family-centered mental health and substance use disorder treatment services across the state of Minnesota - particularly in greater Minnesota. **Minnesota is facing a shortage of workers** educated and experienced in the fields of social work, counseling, alcohol and drug studies, psychology, and nursing. An expansion of the necessary workforce in these areas is needed to meet our state's needs now and into the future.

MACSSA recognizes the leadership of the Center for Rural Behavioral Health in this field and their local community, but Minnesota would also benefit from additional geographically balanced investments in to **expand the skilled workforce in the caring professions**. MACSSA encourages the committee to seek out and invest in innovations to expand the workforce in all communities across our state.

Too many Minnesotans are facing challenges with access to appropriate behavioral and mental health services. Minnesota's health and social services providers experience various barriers to providing necessary services, including the lack of qualified staff to serve a particular set of needs, the difficulty of hiring qualified staff (especially in rural areas), and service rates that may not cover the cost of the initial investments or ongoing services. County or tribal case managers are working tirelessly to find services to meet the needs of individuals with complex needs. Much of the time, specialized resources are not available in local communities or even within the State.

People should have treatment options that do not remove them from the very social supports that are relied upon to help them integrate back into their chosen community. Investments in mental health and behavioral health services requires consideration of location and cultural needs to ensure there is an adequate system of care throughout the state. As we seek to expand our behavioral health continuum of care and develop additional safety net services in our communities, we thank you for your investments to ensure we have an adequate workforce to do the work.

Sincerely,

Matt Freeman
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators