

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Health & Human Services Committee
Minnesota State Senate
March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

On behalf of Apollo Counseling Inc., I am sending this letter to support Senator Boldon's Senate File 926 – 35% bridge increase to outpatient mental health and substance use disorder Medical Assistance rates.

Apollo has been providing in home community services for the last 4 years, and this Increase Is desperately needed to help mental health providers attract qualified staff. Currently many of the people who would otherwise begin their career in mental health are getting competitive offers from retail and food service positions, causing them to divert from their passion for helping people to pay their bills and support their families.

We are in a more severe mental health and SUD care access crisis coming out of the global pandemic than before. At the root of this crisis is the lack of sustainable reimbursement funding for our mental health and SUD care safety net. Costs of delivering care and sustaining staff salaries, benefits, facilities infrastructure and meeting state regulations have increased exponentially. But, Medical Assistance (Medicaid) reimbursements – the core source of funding for our MN mental health and SUD treatment system – have not been increased for a decade and do not include a way to keep up with inflation.

Community mental health providers and programs are striving to keep up with the need for mental health and SUD care, while being reflective and highly responsive to the individuals, families and communities we serve across the state. This work comes with many rewards and challenges – financial, sustainability and human impacts, including:

- Waiting lists for intake and treatment more nearly two months long
- Unfilled staff positions
- Competitive market salaries increasing by up to 30%
- Compounded regulatory forms and reporting
- Required facilities upgrades

Please support increasing our MA rates for mental health and SUD care – this is foundational to solving our mental health and SUD crisis in Minnesota. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely

Sam Major LMFT,

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