

March 22, 2023

Re: Fairview Health Services – Support for SF1174 – Children’s Mental Health

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of Fairview Health Services, I am writing to express support for SF1174, which includes several critical investments in our community mental health system. Over the last three years we have seen the challenges faced by community mental health providers and the direct impact that has on children and families. Since October of 2021, we have seen almost 250 children and adolescents, many with developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges, brought to our emergency departments because their caregivers simply could no longer care for them. Unfortunately, many of these children and adolescents end up spending weeks in our EDs, as our team works with county and state workers to find appropriate placements for them. We know this challenge isn’t unique to our health system as similar situations have played out in hospital emergency departments across our state.

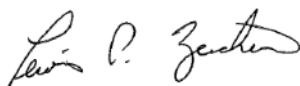
This is just one symptom of the broader mental health crisis that children, families, and caregivers are facing. Getting out of this crisis demands that we build a comprehensive children’s mental health system that provides families with the right level of care, in the right setting, at the right time. As a state, it is critical that we take the necessary steps to build off some of the investments that the legislature made at the end of the 2022 legislative session and continue to urgently expand and create financially sustainable access to needed mental health services for children and families.

We want to specifically call out support for the following provisions in SF1174:

- Funding the development of placement options for children boarding in hospitals
- Expanded access to respite care services for children at risk of residential treatment of hospitalization
- Expanding capacity and allowing specialization of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities
- Providing Medical Assistance coverage for care coordination and enhancing transition support for youth to receive treatment or services in the most appropriate community setting
- Dedicating resources to capacity building and staff training for intensive in-home care
- Funding for children’s mental health discharge options
- Investing in culturally responsive school-linked mental health services and early childhood mental health services and consultation

These provisions in this bill will help to create opportunities for health systems, state agencies, counties and community organizations to come together to innovate and invest in opportunities for the upstream prevention and the downstream needs that we know will make a difference. The crisis we are facing is a complex challenge with no easy answers, but more needs to be done to support the mental health of children in Minnesota and the work cannot wait.

Sincerely,



Lewis P. Zeidner, PhD
Vice President, Mental Health and Addiction Service Line
Fairview Health Services