



March 21, 2023

Dear Senate Health and Human Services Committee members:

Today, I urge you to move SF926 forward to ensure a 35% increase in rates, effective until the new MA rates structure is implemented after the conclusion of the DHS rates study.

Children are in a deeper mental health crisis than pre-pandemic. Record numbers of families have turned to Washburn Center therapists for healing – and our waitlist has grown to historic levels. As the demand is not diminishing, we must invest to shore up the mental health system, so more children and families access critical, life-changing care.

The reality is there will always be more kids and families than we can serve in the foreseeable future. And, that's exacerbated when families face financial hardship and barriers to care. As an agency we are stymied to cover the cost of care by stagnant reimbursement rates that only cover 60%, inflation and workforce demands. This is the stark reality of a long-standing trend of underinvestment in children's mental health.

As a community-based provider, we serve children and families in settings where they learn and live. In 2022, our staff grew as we increased our focus to serve more kids and families; and we served 6.5% more kids in 2022 (vs. 2021). Our model and continuum of care served nearly 4,000 children and their family systems across the Twin Cities area, including more than 40 school settings. And, we still only have just over half of our costs to deliver care with the current reimbursement rates.

Please support and vote in favor of SF926 to ensure the mental health care system can weather the current structure until the DHS rates study is complete and we hopefully achieve stronger structural supports.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Warren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Warren
Chief Executive Officer
Washburn Center for Children