

TO: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Re: SF 2995, School Health: Article 2, Section 69 (page 103)

March 22, 2023

Dear Chairs Wiklund and Mann and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing to provide my support for SF 2995. This proposal supports funding for more mental health promotion programs and school-based health centers.

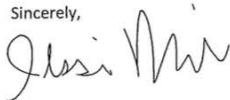
Access to affordable care is imperative in supporting pediatric community health. Uninsured or underinsured children are most at risk of experiencing health access barriers, resulting in poor health and education outcomes. The income and employment loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in about half of the United States' children being covered by Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (Alker & Brooks, 2022). When the pandemic health emergency period ends, it is estimated that 375,000 children will lose Medicaid coverage in Minnesota (Minnesota DHS, 2023), affecting their ability to afford and access healthcare.

School-based health centers diminish access barriers through proximity and familiarity with users (e.g., children and families). Positioned strategically where children spend most of their weekday hours, SBHCs interrupt social structural access inequities because of their unique location. Research evaluating SBHCs demonstrates that school-based initiatives improve health outcomes in children regardless of their entwined social determinants and insurance status (Allison et al., 2007; Arenson et al., 2019; Keeton et al., 2012). Compared to community-based and private clinics, SBHC users are more likely to utilize preventative and mental health care, have higher immunization rates, and have fewer emergency department visits and hospitalizations (Allison et al., 2007).

As the founder and director of a school-based health clinic, we estimate we will serve nearly 2000 children in our clinic this school year. We are planning on opening a second clinic this fall due to the success of our current clinic. SF 2995 will directly help support this work of reaching more children in Minnesota to provide affordable, accessible health care services.

I urge you to consider this legislative proposal as a solution to improve health equity for Minnesota children and adolescents. Thank you for your support and important work.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jessica Mieke, DNP, MSN, RN, PHN  
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Associate Professor of Nursing, College for Women Baccalaureate Nursing Program Director, St. Catherine University