



MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Senator John Hoffman, Chair
Human Services Committee
March 6, 2023

Chair Hoffman and Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN) and the MN Society for Clinical Social Work (Clinical Society), we are writing in support of Senate File 1028. This bill would allow reimbursement through Federal Medicaid for the services school social workers provide to eligible students as part of a comprehensive evaluation process and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Clinical social workers (LICSW) make up the largest group of mental health providers in MN. NASW-MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing over 2000 social workers, and the Clinical Society is a professional group who advance the practice of clinical social work in MN. Collectively, our organizations offer experience and expertise in mental health practice.

Social workers approach our work with a strengths based model. In contrast, the current Children's Therapeutic Support Service (CTSS) framework requires that social workers go beyond special education or the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) criteria, and include the use of a diagnostic assessment or its components. DHS defines a diagnostic assessment on their website as a "written report that documents the clinical and functional face-to-face evaluation of a person's mental health." While this is an important tool, we support the MN School Social Work Association's position that not every student who has an identified social, emotional, or behavioral health need reaches a threshold for mental illness assessment beyond the requirements in a special education evaluation. Thus, it is inappropriate and potentially stigmatizing to insist that families pursue this extra assessment for their student simply for purposes of reimbursement. We believe that school social workers who hold licenses in accordance with statute defining mental health professionals or mental health practitioners properly supervised have not only the expertise, but the ethical responsibility to refer students for additional assessments when necessary.

School social workers outline the needs of students through a comprehensive evaluation and IEP or IFSP. This is a thorough assessment and monitoring process that is designed to give voice to students and their families, as well as assess their needs. School social workers draw upon their professional training and expertise to provide the direct support specified in these plans, and they collaborate with community mental health providers to ensure MN students receive the additional support they need to succeed in the classroom. Unlike the LICSW in a community setting, the majority of school social workers currently provide these services without payment.

We urge you to ease the reimbursement process through Senate File 1028 so that school districts can access these needed federal funds for our schools.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten signature of Karen E. Goodenough]

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Executive Director
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