



Rep. Ruth Richardson
403 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Kelly Morrison
3205 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 13, 2023

Dear Rep. Richardson and Sen. Morrison:

The Coalition of Recovery Investment (CORI) is dedicated to reducing the harm caused by chemical dependency and improving the health of our families, communities, and state. CORI and our member organizations support HF2099/SF2139 that would establish a task force to establish uniform guidelines for when moms and babies are tested and reported for illicit substances to county authorities.

Chemical dependency negatively impacts health, medicine, education, the criminal justice system, child protection, domestic abuse, and most importantly family well-being and child-rearing. Recognizing this, CORI wants to help overcome the single-issue focus of criminalizing or punishing Minnesotans for the disease they have. Stigma towards people who use drugs is pervasive and negatively impacts the care of substance-using people by characterizing addiction as a weakness and fostering beliefs that undermine the personal resources needed to access treatment and recover from addiction.

Stigma acts on multiple levels by blaming people for having a problem and then making it difficult for them to get help, but in spite of this, most pregnant people who use substances reduce or stop using when they learn they are pregnant. Because of stigmatizing attitudes that a person who uses substances is unfit to parent, pregnant people who use substances are at heightened risk of being screened for substance use, referred to child welfare services, and having their parental rights taken away; these outcomes are even more likely for people of color.

This bill could have a tremendous impact in helping health care professionals cultivate trusting relationships with their patients and coordinate the health care services they need to have a healthy pregnancy.

If CORI can be of help or if you have questions, please reach out to CORI's consultants, Sarah Erickson, at sarah.erickson@unitedstrategiesllc.com or Tara Erickson at Tara@tgeconsultingmn.com.

Sincerely,

Bill Messinger
Chair
Coalition of Recovery Investment