

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate
March 13, 2024

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP), I am sending this letter in support of Senate File 3451—updating regulations and providing workforce flexibilities across our MN mental health system.

My organization, Washburn Center for Children (a member of MACMHP) leads Minnesota in child-centered mental health care with a broad and deep spectrum of outpatient services across the continuum of care. The mental health care kids receive at Washburn Center is a safety-net. Community-based mental health care is for all kids and families who need us, period. As an agency, Washburn is balancing community needs that are not going anywhere, financial sustainability and taking care of our staff so they develop and grow – sustaining this mission for this generation of children and those to come.

Providing care in these models means we must comply with all the various mental health services' regulations of the state.

We are working to build our programs to respond to as many needs of our clients and communities as we can. In this current workforce crisis and sparsely invested mental health and SUD environment, community mental health and SUD programs are further challenged by continuing to have to navigate convoluted regulatory requirements that created silos of care rather than bringing services together under consistent standards. This adds to the struggle to keep access to quality care available for our communities.

S.F. 3451 contains many proposals which allow community mental health clinics to keep moving toward an integrated, holistic model of care. These include: increasing access to our communities and clients by removing entry barriers; supporting our staff and programs by flexibly responding to today's lack of workforce capacity; supporting clinics' ability to comply with regulations by bringing consistency to them; and allow our clinicians to work at the top of their licenses and focus on providing good care to clients and communities. This bill furthers efforts to streamline regulations that govern the services we provide together under one roof.

Washburn Center thanks this Committee and rest of the legislature for the good work you have done over these several years in bringing our mental health regulations together in one statute (245I) and first steps in streamlining them. We are hopeful this bill is the next step in that good work to build a regulatory system that can respond with the changing needs of our industry and our communities. Please support SF 3451.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

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