



Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
March 14, 2024

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP), I urge you to work together to support Senate File 3451 - updating regulations and providing workforce flexibility across our MN mental health system.

Washburn Center for Children is staffed by multidisciplinary professionals serving communities across a continuum of care for children's mental health. Our staff includes social workers who fulfill many critical roles providing direct services to clients, overseeing programs and supervising other clinicians and teams within our 3 sites, in community settings and homes.

Every kid we serve, nearly 4,000 last year, is navigating mental health challenges that outpace what we imagined for this generation—any generation. Children are experiencing more overlapping diagnosis and needing extended treatment plans as we emerge from the pandemic and its disruption to children's lives, connections and stability. They are the future of Minnesota.

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. We offer services in community, schools, homes and clinics, regardless of the client's ability to pay, and as a result 50% of the kids and families we serve are covered through some form of medical assistance. We build our programs to respond to as many needs of our clients and communities as we can.

Providing care in these models means we must comply with all the mental health services' regulations of the state. With the workforce crisis and historic under-investment in mental health and SUD, community programs, like ours, are further challenged by convoluted regulatory requirements that create silos of care instead of services united by 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 for Children is grateful to this Committee and all legislators for the work you have done to bring our mental health regulations together in one statute (245I) and first steps to streamline. We are hopeful this bill is the next step to build a regulatory system that is responsive to the needs of the community and that of our workforce.

Please support SF 3451. Thank you for your leadership.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig F. Warren".

Craig F. Warren  
Chief Executive Officer  
Washburn Center for Children