



March 11, 2024

SENATOR MELISSA WIKLUND, CHAIR

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINNESOTA STATE SENATE

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

On behalf of Woodland Centers, I am sending this letter to support **Senator Bolden's Senate File 3451—updating regulations and providing workforce flexibilities across our MN mental health system.**

Woodland Centers is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) comprehensive community mental health center established in 1958. We serve seven rural counties in the west central region of Minnesota – Chippewa, Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Renville, and Swift. Woodland Centers catchment area encompasses approximately 5000 square miles with a population of approximately 114,000. Woodland Centers serves approximately 5,000 unduplicated individuals each year ranging in age from toddlers to the elderly.

Woodland Centers provides a spectrum of mental health and substance use disorder services to our communities from the same organization. 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.

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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.

Woodland Centers 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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Ashley Kjos, Psy.D., L.P.

Chief Executive Officer

Woodland Centers