



March 12, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

Our mental health system is in crisis. We have increasing needs and decreasing resources. We are in the midst of a workforce crisis. We know from the recently released rates study that we have inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates for our mental health providers. This crisis is resulting in Minnesotans not being able to access the level of care they need when they need it. Providers are closing their doors and beds are taken offline due to staffing shortages.

Medicaid is the single largest payer for mental health services in the United States and thus low rates are not offset by higher private insurance rates. In Minnesota, people from Black and American Indian communities are more likely to use Medicaid thus adding to mental health care disparities.

Professionals, government leaders, and communities have acknowledged the worsening children's mental health crisis in our state and country. NAMI's helpline has received an increased volume and complexity of calls. At the same time, we are seeing our treatment capacity in Minnesota shrink. We hear of people boarding in the emergency rooms, being placed on months long waiting lists, and being discharged to the street because no community programs have openings.

That's why NAMI Minnesota strongly supports the Mental Health Legislative Network's bill to increase Medical Assistance rates which is authored by Senator Wiklund. This bill is necessary to ensure that people across the state have access to timely, quality, culturally responsive treatment. Raising rates is the primary way we can solve the mental health workforce crisis and increase access to lifesaving services.

We must continue to build out a continuum of early intervention, prevention, outpatient, intensive, and crisis services. Yet, at a certain point, we are loading an abundance of resources into a cart with broken wheels. Children and families will not see those resources in time and preventable crises will go without intervention if we do not have a foundation of robust rates and investment. Thank you for considering the rate adjustments bill. We look forward to working with you to prioritize mental health this session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director