



March 12, 2024

Dear Chair Wiklund and Health and Human Services Committee Members,

I am writing to express support for MH Rates SC0952-2, to implement crucial adjustments to medical assistance rates, particularly in areas concerning behavioral health services and hospital payment rates. This bill holds importance to Quality Parenting Initiative - Minnesota, given the children and families we serve in child welfare, and the belief in equitable access to quality healthcare services for all members of our community.

Quality, timely treatment is necessary to solve Minnesota's mental health crisis, and fixing Medicaid mental health rates is one of the foundational needs today. Imagine a seven-year-old child, who has recently been removed from their home due to allegations of neglect. Understandably, this child is grappling with a whirlwind of emotions – confusion, fear, and a profound sense of loss. Amid this turmoil, timely access to therapy services can make a difference in their journey towards healing and resilience.

Unfortunately, the reality for many children in the foster care system is different. Due to long waiting lists and bureaucratic hurdles, children may be forced to wait six to nine months before receiving the mental health support they so desperately need. During this agonizing wait, the child's trauma may deepen, their emotional well-being may deteriorate, and their chances of successful reunification with her family may diminish.

Now, contrast this scenario with one where the child receives therapy services early into their child protection case as soon as the need arises. With timely access to trauma-informed care, this child can process their emotions, develop coping strategies, and build trusting relationships with their caregivers. As a result, the child's resilience grows, their behavioral challenges lessen, and their prospects for long-term stability improve exponentially.

But this child's story is not just one of individual triumph – it is a testament to the power of early intervention in transforming the trajectory of entire families. By equipping caregivers with the tools and support they need to nurture the child's emotional well-being, we lay the foundation for a stronger, more resilient family unit. In doing so, we not only safeguard the child's future but also break the cycle of intergenerational trauma that plagues so many families involved in the child welfare system.

While I recognize that implementing these adjustments may pose certain challenges, particularly in terms of short-term costs, I firmly believe that the long-term benefits far outweigh any initial concerns. Evidence suggests that investing in comprehensive healthcare services not only improves health outcomes but also generates substantial savings by mitigating the need for more costly interventions down the line.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I urge you to lend your support to MH Rates SC0952-2. I remain hopeful for positive action in support of equitable healthcare access for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kate Rickord, MA, LP'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kate Rickord, MA, LP
Director, QPI-MN

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Ensuring excellent, developmentally informed parenting in the child welfare system.