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April 2, 2024

Senator Melissa H. Wiklund, Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants to thank you for including the provisions of S.F. 4124 (Hoffman) in your A-6 delete-everything amendment.

Everyone is aware of the mental health crisis – inadequate numbers of providers, increasing demand for services, and harm to patients and their families from deferred care. S.F. 4124 is part of the solution to this crisis. Physician assistants (PAs) are trained and licensed to diagnose mental illness, prescribe medications, and monitor response to treatment. Psychiatry is a required component of every accredited PA program and the PA national board exam. Psychiatric illness is pervasive across all medical specialties and PAs care for patients with mental illness daily.

However, despite being trained and licensed to provide mental health medical services, subdivision 5 of the PA practice act requires a second, redundant practice agreement which specifically limits the ability of PAs to provide care to patients with mental illness and conflicts with the practice agreement required in Subdivision 3. Subdivision 5 also conflicts with federal Medicare, the National Rural Health Association, and the 21st Century Cares Act, which all identify PAs as part of the solution to the mental health provider crisis.

S.F. 4124 deletes the redundant practice agreement of Subdivision 5 and keeps the practice agreement of Subdivision 3. This bill simply removes redundancy that is causing confusion and therefore limiting the utilization of PAs in Minnesota's medical system.

The Minnesota Board of Medical Practice supports this legislation as do hospitals and other mental health providers.

Again, thank you for supporting mental health patients and providers by including this important provision in your A-6 DE amendment.

Sincerely,

Alannah Zheng, MSPA, PA-C, CLC
Chair, Legislative & Reimbursement Committee
Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants