

April 17, 2024

Senator Melissa Wiklund  
2107 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Avenue W.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Senate Health & Human Services Committee Members:

Ramsey County wishes to express our thanks for the inclusion of \$1.5 million in one-time funding to support our Youth Mental Health Urgent Care (SF 2960, Hoffman). Families in our community urgently need mental health services and supports to help them through a behavioral or mental-health crisis and the Mental Health Urgent Care was born out of this need for non-emergency-level care and respite options for youth. We provide culturally-appropriate, comprehensive mental health crisis services for teens and their families. We appreciate the committee's support for this exciting and unique program.

Additionally, Ramsey County is pleased to see the inclusion of SF 716 (Champion), a bill that makes significant efforts to keep African American and other disproportionately represented children with their families. We know that racial disparities exist throughout the entire child protection process, particularly for African American families. Ramsey County is committed to working with community to address these disparities to create a more equitable child protection system that works for all families.

Finally, as this legislation heads to final passage and conference committee, we urge the Senate to consider further investments in support for emergency homelessness services. Since 2018, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Ramsey County has nearly tripled. Warming Spaces have regularly hosted more than 150 adults, youth and families each night during recent winter months. Ramsey County's family shelter waitlist has had over 25 families waiting for available space. Expanded and reliable funding will provide and sustain shelter support and services to families, single adults and youth as well as move more people on to a path for housing. The need is great and we look to you for assistance in solving this crisis in our communities.

We greatly appreciate the committee's hard work in putting together this comprehensive health and human services bill. We look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead to build a package that fully supports the needs of our communities across Ramsey County and the state of Minnesota.

Thank you,



Commissioner Trista Martinson  
Ramsey County Board Chair