



Dear Senator Hoffman and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Yussuf Shafie. I am the CEO and Treatment Director for the Alliance Wellness Center. I am writing you to today to express my concern with SF3459 as currently written.

Sometimes, a bill as proposed with the most sincere intent and aim to provide beneficial opportunities to the people of Minnesota does not have that outcome upon passage. As a community organization we must express our concerns that SF3459 does much more harm to organizations that provide SUD supports across our state than the potential good it may supply for specific individuals.

Alliance Wellness Center is a culturally specific program for men and women predominantly East African most specifically Somali. Many of these men and women are battling not just their substance abuse, but also the profound stigma of mental illness in the Somali community. Minnesota has worked very hard over the last 5 years to move to a Direct Access system where clients are able to choose the program they wish to attend. The clients that choose Alliance come here not only for substance use disorder treatment but because they are able to practice their beliefs. This week is Ramadan and to our clients that matters. Direct access matters. This bill appears to require our staff to provide separate programming to a client who made the choice to attend our program, instead of making an appropriate referral to a provider that might be a better fit. How does this make sense for best practice in client care, client choice and direct access to care?

The advocates and authors of this bill failed to include the stakeholders that it would impact directly, therefore we must oppose it in the current form. We would be curious to know which, if any, affected groups the chief author and advocates chose to engage in their conversations before presenting this bill.

I invite conversations from authors and advocates around this bill to work with us and other organizations to make sure any legislation that comes forward on this topic. We all want to make sure the people of Minnesota facing addiction have the opportunity for all paths to recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yussuf Shafie', is written over a horizontal line.

Yussuf Shafie CEO, Treatment Director