



REBEKKA L. STUMME
JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT
MN SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
301 WALNUT AVE.
CARLTON, MN 55718

March 13, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

Please accept this written testimony in support of H.F. 4005 and its companion bill S.F. 4950. Due to the court's packed schedule, I am unable to appear in person to demonstrate my vigorous support for passing legislation that is vital to the recovery and success of participants in treatment courts across the state of Minnesota.

Treatment courts, also known as drug courts, in Minnesota are dedicated to support and accountability for Minnesotans with substance use disorders that are high risk and high needs. To be clear, treatment or drug courts accept participants that have an addiction to controlled substances, not to alcohol. Minnesotans that are "high risk and high needs" means that traditional probation is not "enough" for individuals that are convicted of felony drug offenses to ensure both the public safety and successful recovery from the use of controlled substances. Participants in treatment courts, frankly, need more support, time, attention, and close monitoring to have a chance at success.

Participants in treatment courts have many demands on them to successfully complete the program. In addition to substance use treatment on an in-patient basis, they must attend outpatient treatment, attend court weekly, report to the probation department for a minimum of two urinalysis tests per week, attend a minimum of two recovery support meetings and events per week, mental health appointments, doctors' visits, and complete mandated community service hours. All the aforementioned mandated treatment court expectations require transportation.

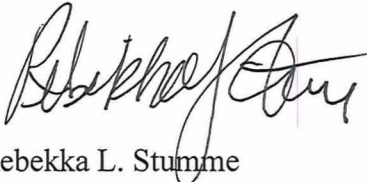
I am one of two district court judges in rural Carlton County. In our county, we have a very limited transportation service that has a limited bus route, with very set and limited times. For example, the transit does not come to the Carlton County Courthouse. Without said public transportation, treatment court participants must rely upon family members or friends to drive them to their mandated treatment court activities. However, that is problematic as the mandated activities are during business hours and participants may not be able to rely upon family and friends for these rides. Secondly, many of our participants come from broken homes with family members (often parents) who do not support the participant's recovery. Third, due to the rural nature of our county, many of the services available for our participants are in the larger city of Duluth, which is a 25-minute drive from Carlton.

What I have seen time and again is our participants being left with no option but to drive themselves to these mandated activities. Most of our people do not have valid driver's licenses. The barriers to our people getting their driver's licenses back are insurmountable for someone newly in recovery – astronomical fines and fees, the requirement of ignition interlock devices that are cost prohibitive for them, as well as some who have never been able to secure a valid driver's license due to society and familial issues. The result is that many of our participants collect numerous driving tickets for not having a valid driver's license, putting them farther behind in being able to become valid in the future.

I know that Carlton County is not unique in the challenges that our rural community faces. In addition to the lack of public transportation, we lack local wraparound services for our participants, including sober housing, outpatient treatment, mental health care providers, and the list goes on and on. This is an issue facing greater Minnesota.

I wholeheartedly support legislation that will help our treatment court participants during the time that they are in the court program to be able to drive legally. Please remember that these participants are drug tested at least twice a week by probation, and by their treatment providers at those in- and outpatient programs. The higher monitoring provided by treatment court participation will help to ensure the public safety. Empowering treatment court participants to be law-abiding citizens will instill self-worth and motivation to continue their recovery journeys.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebekka L. Stumme', written in a cursive style.

Rebekka L. Stumme