

Thomas E. Kottke, MD, MSPH testimony to the Minnesota Legislature March 24, 2025; SF 2019

Members of the committee, members of the public. I am Thomas Kottke. I live in Saint Paul, District 64A, and have practiced cardiology for 40 years at the University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic Rochester, and HealthPartners until I retired in December 2024. During that time, I have also advocated for measures that improve community health because it is here that the greatest gains in health and well-being for individuals can be made. It is also true that Minnesotans must be healthy if they are to be prosperous.

Today I would like to speak in favor of Senate File 2019. This bill asks to increase award amounts for innovative service-learning grants.

I think many are aware that loneliness is an epidemic in America and, as pointed out by Dr. Vivek Murthy when he was Surgeon General, loneliness is a barrier to health. HealthPartners data show that the youngest adults are suffering the most and began to suffer even before Covid.

We also know that volunteering improves the health and well-being of individuals and improves the quality of life in whole communities. Because of these facts, participation in HealthPartners' Teen Leadership Council requires that teens volunteer in a community program.

Even while acknowledging that volunteering is a good idea and wanting to do so, volunteering can be hard to start. The program for high school students described in SF 2019 teaches students how to engage in improving their own communities through voluntarism, and it will introduce them to the personal benefits of volunteering. I unequivocally support the adoption of Senate file 2019.

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your commitment to the people of Minnesota.