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February 24, 2025

ATTN: Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

I am writing on behalf of Fernbrook Family Center as a request that you support **SF1402**. This bill would be instrumental in building capacity and infrastructure to provide mental health services to kids and families in Minnesota.

The needs of kids and families have increased significantly and the lack of access to mental health services is putting them at great risk. Provider shortages and burnout are problematic and worsening.

Access to mental health services is shrinking at a time when the needs are great, the risks are life threatening and providers are simply burnt out. The 2024 DHS Rate Study outlined a solution to fixing Medical Assistance reimbursement rates for mental health services. It is imperative we begin to implement these changes immediately in order to prevent further closures and shrinkage in services.

According to a recent survey completed by AspireMN, current wait times for services are 14 weeks. Our intake team is overwhelmed with calls daily from frantic and upset caregivers because they desperately want their child to receive mental health services and everywhere they call says they are not taking new clients. I am grateful we are often able to help, but I worry about the burden on our staff of often feeling as though they are someone's only hope for help and feeling as though they can't say no.

This bill would be instrumental in investing in our capacity to serve kids and families. Long-term solutions are being discussed and worked on, but we have an immediate crisis that can't wait for these solutions. We need immediate and significant investment in a workforce that has dedicated their lives to serving and helping our most vulnerable constituents.

We ask that you vote to support **SF1402** during the hearing on February 26, 2025!

Thank you!

Shannon Brown, MS, LPCC

Chief Executive Officer

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