



February 24, 2025

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to express Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's support of SF 1402. As a statewide community-based provider, we know all too well that maintaining access to mental health care for our neighbors requires critical investment in community-based mental health services. In 2024, LSS' Behavioral Health team supported 2,668 individuals in 76 counties through 19,320 in-person therapy visits, 7,043 telehealth visits, and 65 employer, school, and shelter-linked mental health partnerships.

We pride ourselves on working with anyone who contacts us and connecting them to a continuum of integrated services that reflect compassion, integrity, and respect. However, providers -- including LSS -- are experiencing multiple challenges to meet the mental health needs of Minnesotans. This includes operating for several years with reimbursement rates far below the true cost of service and a severe shortage of mental health providers. Demand for mental health services is also high and the needs of clients are highly complex. In 2025, we are facing the additional challenge of critical access rate reductions which is creating additional pressure while already operating within an unsustainable reimbursement model.

LSS remains steadfast in our commitment to serving as a safety net provider for individuals in need of mental health services throughout Minnesota. However, we cannot accomplish this alone. We rely on your recognition of the critical importance of mental health services and request you prioritize funding mental health this session.

To ensure that we can continue providing services to individuals and families who need it most, we respectfully urge your support for this bill. Your partnership in addressing the mental health needs of our communities is invaluable. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org, if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin Sutton", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota