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Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

We are writing to indicate our support for the following Senate Files that are slated to be heard on Wednesday, February 26th, 2025:

- SF 1402, Medicaid Rates
- SF 1561, Solutions to Children Boarding
- SF 0928, School-linked funding, NEMT improvements, and aftercare support

Given our role supporting Minnesota residents in a rural county in southern Minnesota, the impact these three proposals would have on addressing mental health and improving the quality of life for individuals in our community cannot be understated. We see the impact, daily, that a lack of providers, inadequate boarding options, and lack of funding has on our community members. As we write you this letter, we have two youth without appropriate boarding settings due to a lack of suitable options, in addition to a lack of local resources that could have prevented the placements all together.

Increasing the rates that mental health providers receive for their services does not simply show interest in supporting the mental health of Minnesotans, it shows action. *Focusing efforts to address children's boarding* issues validates that our system is under-resourced and that the change needed to address these challenges starts with the legislature. Lastly, an *emphasis on school-linked funding, NEMT improvements, and aftercare support* shows a commitment to improve our mental health system from a holistic perspective, recognizing that it is not just the in-office services that are necessary, but the services that make treatment more accessible, including transportation support and funding behavioral health supports in schools.

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of Mower County and thank you for your efforts to address these much-needed areas in our state's mental health care system.

Kindly,

Crystal Peterson, Health and Human Services Director

Trish Harren, Mower County Administrator

Polly Glynn, Mower County Board Chair

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