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To: Chair Wicklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Date: February 24, 2025

RE: HF671/SF1561

FROM: Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW – Executive Director

*Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW*

Dear Honorable Chair Wicklund and Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee-

I am writing to provide support for SF1561-Solutions to Children Boarding. Children boarding in emergency rooms due to mental health crises is a growing crisis that highlights severe gaps in the health care system. Many children experiencing acute psychiatric distress are forced to wait in ER's for days or even weeks because there are not enough inpatient psychiatric beds or community based provided services available. ER's are not equipped to provide the specialized care these children need, leading to prolonged distress, inadequate treatment, and increased risk of harm. The lack of appropriate care also strains hospital resources leaving emergency departments overwhelmed and unable to serve other patients effectively. This situation not only fails children in crisis but also exposes systemic failures of mental health funding providers, shortages, and insufficient preventive care options. Addressing this issue requires urgent investment in mental health infrastructure, increased provider reimbursement rates and expanded access to early intervention and crisis stabilization services.

We must invest in the systems of care that support the mental health of children and families, the downstream negative impacts are happening now. The slow erosion of inadequate rates and lack of support for community-based programs to thrive have led to children languishing in higher levels of care for much longer periods of time. On both ends of this continuum we see a severe shortage in community-based providers to provide services prior to crisis, and then a shortage in community-based providers to provide services after a crisis. Children and families may go without these essential services, creating a continuum of inadequate supports.