



February 26, 2025

SENATOR MELISSA WIKLUND, CHAIR

HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

On behalf of Woodland Centers, I am sending this letter to support of **Senate File 477 – Mental Health Regulatory Relief**.

Woodland Centers is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) comprehensive community mental health center established in 1958. We serve seven rural counties in the west central region of Minnesota – Chippewa, Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Renville, and Swift. Woodland Centers catchment area encompasses approximately 5000 square miles with a population of approximately 114,000. Approximately 75% of the clients served at Woodland Centers are enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs and another 15% are enrolled in Medicare. Approximately 90% of our clients are eligible for sliding fee scale reductions and around 85% of these individuals are provided a 100% sliding fee scale reduction. Woodland Centers serves approximately 5,000 unduplicated individuals each year ranging in age from toddlers to the elderly.

Delivering care in this environment means navigating a complex web of state regulations governing mental health services. While we are committed to expanding our programs to meet the evolving needs of our communities, unnecessary regulatory burdens make it increasingly difficult to provide integrated, holistic, and accessible mental health care.

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S.F.477 is a crucial step toward modernizing and streamlining mental health regulations, ensuring that providers like Woodland Centers can focus on what matters most—patient care. Specifically, this bill would:


- implementing supervision requirements that promotes critical staffing roles
- aligning documentation requirements with practical processes for clinic providers
- supporting staff for administrative leadership roles who possess the competency, skills and experience regardless of their clinician stature (clarifying staff leadership eligibility within an assertive community treatment team) or educational background (expanding eligible case managers' degree types)
- un-duplicating regulatory oversight and required reporting mechanisms (in intensive residential services)

We believe these policy and regulatory changes are necessary to sustaining our mental health and SUD services, AND we need state investments in our care system. Limited capacity, the workforce shortage and shrinking service access are all connected by the lack of sustainable investments in our mental health and SUD service delivery system. Solutions must also be comprehensive and address both the inpatient and community services up and downstream from them. We need to invest in community services to prevent situations that we can from becoming critically acute care and support community-based capacity for when clients are ready to move to less intense levels of care.

Woodland Centers thanks this Committee and rest of the legislature for the good work you have done over these several years in bringing our mental health regulations together and steps you have taken in streamlining them. We are hopeful this bill is the next step in that good work to build a regulatory system that can respond with the changing needs of our industry and our communities.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

Sincerely



Ashley Kjos, Psy.D., L.P.

Chief Executive Officer

Woodland Centers