



An association of resources and advocacy for children, youth and families
www.aspiremn.org

February 24, 2025

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

AspireMN is a statewide association of child and family serving organizations and we strongly support SF928 and its provisions to establish greatly needed aftercare for children and families, improve Non-Emergency Medical Transportation for children, and sustain investment in School-Linked Mental Health services for students and families statewide.

We are grateful to Senator Mann for her leadership on this proposal and appreciate the committee's interest in the targeted improvements for our children's mental health system found in SF928.

Aftercare remains greatly needed for children transitioning from intensive mental health and residential services back to their home communities. Positively, there is a tested aftercare approach found in Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) that could make a profound difference for children and families with similar needs. Healthy transitions requires establishing new household habits, seeking new community-based therapists and services and knowing where to go for timely support when unanticipated difficulties emerge. Community Integration services will support families, prevent children from returning to higher levels of care, and leverage existing Children's Therapeutic Support and Services (CTSS) providers to deliver the aftercare that is sorely needed.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation has not been designed to serve children, and, for the children who rely on NEMT to attend regular therapies and other health services – NEMT is a critical asset. Unfortunately too many terrible stories have been told based on the absence of any support for children within the design of NEMT. SF928 seeks to improve safety and access to NEMT through the simple steps of requiring door to door service for children and reimbursing at 125 of the base rate for children's drivers who have been trained in the Type III School Bus driver curriculum and equipped to understand and support the unique needs of children.

School-Linked Mental Health is a service that has been the pride of Minnesota for many years – services are provided to students within school settings by community based providers leveraging a result that benefits students, teachers, families and whole communities. The goal has always been for all students statewide to access this care. Unfortunately there is a budget cliff this grant program is facing in 2027 – SF928 seeks to address that cliff and establish sustaining funding that will prevent cuts to this incredibly valuable service model.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirsten Anderson".

Kirsten Anderson
Executive Director

AspireMN improves the lives of children, youth and families served by member organizations through support for quality service delivery, leadership development and policy advocacy.