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February 24, 2025

ATTN: Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

I am writing on behalf of Fernbrook Family Center as a request that you support **SF0928**. This bill would be instrumental in building capacity and infrastructure to provide mental health services to kids and families in Minnesota.

In Minnesota, School Linked Mental Health funding serves as a crucial support for many families. This proven service helps eliminate obstacles for children to access care. It enables caregivers to avoid missing work for therapy appointments and facilitates easier collaboration among providers and a child's treatment team. Additionally, it offers financial assistance for those who struggle with deductibles and co-pays, ensuring that essential services remain accessible. However, the current grant faces a fiscal cliff in 2027, which could force providers to cut back on services at a time when the demand is growing while support is dwindling. The proposed bill also expands eligibility to include caregivers, acknowledging that a caregiver's mental health can significantly impact a child's progress in therapy. By addressing these challenges, the initiative aims to deliver comprehensive, wraparound care that boosts the chances of successful outcomes.

This bill also requires NEMT services for children to be door to door services. This will ensure kids are not being left alone or in unsafe situations and are being transferred to a safe adult to begin services.

This bill also allows providers to begin billing community based services for a restricted amount of time while a child is in residential treatment. Currently, providers are not able to begin these services until a client has been discharged. Many times the gap between residential services and community based services is problematic and the transition is not successful. This bill would allow us to ensure a successful transition to a lower level of care, which would reduce the recidivism and would alleviate much of the anxiety families have during this stressful time.

We ask that you vote to support **SF0928** during the hearing on February 26, 2025!

Thank you!

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