

February 24, 2025

Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing in support of the Mental Health Legislative Network bills being heard today, SF 8, SF 477, SF 928, SF 1561, and SF 1402. These bills cover a number of important issues to increase access to care for children and adults living with mental illnesses.

Medicaid reimbursement rates are too low, making it difficult for providers to meet the needs of people in Minnesota. Some providers are closing their doors completely, while others are scrambling to recruit and retain skilled professionals. The impact is that children and adults are waiting for months to receive the care they need. Children are boarding in emergency rooms, with counties, and in juvenile detention facilities. Emotional based school avoidance has continued to increase as stressors on families increase as well. Increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates means increasing access to care. We urge your support of SF 1402 to provide gradual increases to rates for critical mental health services.

Specifically, for our children we would like to call out the school-linked mental health program in SF 928, which faces a \$5 million funding cliff this year. This program provides essential access to mental health professionals in over 90% of the school districts in the state. Now is not the time to reduce capacity for such a critical service. Most school-linked services are billed to public and private health plans, and grants go to cover services for students who are uninsured and underinsured. We know that needs are increasing for our students and their families. We must protect this important service and continue to expand it to be available to all students in the state.

Thank you for taking the time to hear these important bills and for prioritizing mental health. While we are in a mental health crisis in Minnesota, we do have a path forward that can take us from crisis to recovery. It means building an equitable mental health system and the legislation before you today takes important steps to that end. We urge your support.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Elliot Butay
Senior Policy Coordinator