



Volunteers of America of Minnesota
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Behavioral and Mental Health Program

February 25, 2025

RE: Support for SF 0928 – Children’s Mental Health Program Modifications and Appropriations

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

On behalf of Volunteers of America of Minnesota, I write in strong support of SF 0928, which makes critical modifications and appropriations to strengthen Minnesota’s children’s mental health system. As a long-term provider of school-based mental health services, we know firsthand the importance of accessible, community-based care for children and families. This legislation prioritizes key investments—such as school-linked funding, improvements to Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), and aftercare support—that will ensure children receive the mental health care they need when and where they need it.

School-based mental health services are one of the most effective ways to reach children early, reduce barriers to care, and improve long-term outcomes. Yet, funding challenges continue to threaten the sustainability of these programs. **Expanding school-linked mental health funding** through SF 0928 will allow us to serve more students, increase early intervention efforts, and provide critical supports that help children succeed academically and emotionally.

Additionally, for many of the families we serve, transportation remains a significant barrier to accessing care. **Improvements to NEMT services** will ensure that children and their families can attend vital therapy sessions, psychiatric appointments, and follow-up care without logistical and financial burdens standing in the way.

Finally, **transition to community living services is essential** to sustaining progress once a child has received treatment. Ensuring continued care coordination, aftercare planning, and community-based supports will help prevent relapses and crisis situations, keeping children on the path to long-term stability and well-being.

By passing SF 0928, the Legislature has an opportunity to strengthen Minnesota’s children’s mental health system in ways that are practical, effective, and urgently needed. We urge you to support this bill and invest in the mental health of our state’s children. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Manworren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Julie Manworren, President & CEO
Volunteers of America of Minnesota