

March 12, 2025

Chair Melissa H. Wicklund
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Room 1100
Minnesota Senate Building

Dear Chair Wicklund and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I write today in support of SF1682, to clarify that a child whose parents are unable to access services for a child in need due to system constraints is *not* a child in need of protection. As a child welfare professional, I can attest this bill is overdue and necessary to avoid further negative consequences of our already overburdened child protection and children's mental health systems. This bill, if passed, would also codify the existing practice and screening guidelines from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families¹.

I talk with families at least once a month who are navigating the situations outlined in this bill. As you are aware, the need for children's mental health services has increased and the availability of higher level care has not been able to meet the demand. There are parents whose children are in the hospital because they pose a significant risk to themselves or others due to mental health symptoms. These parents are trying desperately to get their children the support they need in a residential treatment facility or other higher level of care, and they're usually in communication with their county and other service providers to do so, but there are no openings. It is absolutely not an issue of maltreatment, the services are just not available.

While there is other work to be done to strengthen our children's mental health system and ensure more treatment options are in place, this bill will at least ensure families do not face involuntary child welfare involvement while trying to figure out everything else they need to do to take care of their family during an extremely stressful time.

Please pass SF1682 to support our kids and families. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and for your commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of all in our state.

With gratitude,

Brittani Lamb, MSW, LISW
Child Welfare Professional
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¹ <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfsserver/Public/DHS-5144-ENG>, page 59