



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

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Dear Chair Wiklund and Health and Human Services Committee Members,

AspireMN is grateful to Senator Mohamed for her authorship and to this committee for hearing SF2134, we are hopeful that this language will pass in 2025 to update antiquated language that is too often confusing for families.

Children's mental health service providers have shared that for families, the terms "serious emotional disturbance" or "emotional disturbance" create confusion. School systems have categories of service for children described as "emotionally behaviorally disturbed" and this is confusingly not equivalent to the medical necessity described in the definition of "emotional disturbance." These terms are experienced as incongruent with the person-centered language of children's mental health care, where the field is increasingly using mental illness as the generalized term to describe a level of need of a child requiring mental health care.

The term mental illness is a much more accurate description of what the child is experiencing and importantly is associated with mental health care and treatment. Children's mental health symptoms can be treated – children can get better and have improved mental health experiences over their short and long-term futures. This is a far more promising trajectory for the child and family to consider than the alternative language of "emotional disturbance" that can feel like a permanent and negative label.

In this critical time it is important to pursue all possible efforts for our children's mental health system to be more accessible, responsive and affirming for children and families needing care. SF2134 takes an important step by updating the language we use to be more accurate, respectful and clear.

Thank you for your leadership.

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.

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