



March 20, 2025

Senator Melissa H. Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave W
St Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for SF2349 – County-Involved Youth

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

I am writing today in support of SF2349. This legislation, developed by seven metro counties working collaboratively, is critical to addressing the urgent need for improvements in how we serve youth with complex mental and behavioral health needs. The result will be a regional continuum of care for serving these youth no matter how they enter the county systems.

As recommended by the Working Group on Youth Interventions, establishing a regional approach will address the overlapping of juvenile justice and human services systems to provide placement and treatment options across the continuum. The regional framework will help counties to leverage individual and collective assets and resources, identify gaps, and develop solutions.

To implement the regional framework, the participating counties have identified legislative policy changes which will have an immediate and positive impact on the continuum of care. These include:

- Removing a moratorium on new beds for foster care homes
- Forming a legislative task force to streamline residential facility licensing rules (Minn. R. 2960)
- Implementing the rate study recommendations for non-residential youth programming
- Addressing placement options for youth

Dakota County is deeply involved and committed to the regional framework. We firmly believe these policy changes will meet the needs of these youth and their families, yet we recognize the limitations of gathering and sharing accurate data on this population has prevented a true cost-benefit analysis. We expect the continued regional work to achieve this analysis in order to fully support investment of dollars toward enhancing the continuum of available placement options for youth.

We urge your support for this effort as we work collaboratively to meet the needs of Minnesota's youth.

Sincerely,

Mike Slavik, Chair
Dakota County Board of Commissioners

County Board of Commissioners