

April 1, 2025

**RE: Support for SF 2349, County-Involved Youth**

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

I am writing today in support of SF 2349. 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 health and behavioral needs. The result will be a regional continuum of care for serving these youth no matter how they enter county systems, using a whole-person, cross-system approach.

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. This regional approach aligns with Ramsey County's goal of strengthening individual, family and community health, safety and well-being; and our vision of creating a vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

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

- Addressing placement options for youth
- Removing a moratorium on new beds for foster care homes
- Beginning to implement the rate study recommendations for non-residential youth programming.

Ramsey County is deeply involved and committed to the regional framework. We firmly believe this approach will meet the needs of youth and their families – both in Ramsey County and across the state.

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

Sincerely,



Rafael Ortega,  
Chair, Ramsey County Board of Commissioners