



SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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March 25, 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 SF 2349 County-Involved Youth

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of Scott County, I am writing today in support of SF 2349. The seven metro counties worked collaboratively on this important legislation, which addresses the urgent need to improve how we serve youth with complex mental health and safety needs. The outcome of this legislation will be a regional continuum of care that uses a whole-person, cross-system approach to serve youth no matter how they enter the county system.

As a longtime participant in the existing regional system for serving county-involved youth, Scott County operates a Juvenile Alternative Facility (JAF), which serves young people in need of a non-secure placement. Increasingly, the JAF has functioned as a non-secure juvenile facility for the entire region, with approximately 75% of the youth served at the JAF coming from outside Scott County. After years of serving the region, the JAF needs repairs and/or a new location. Now is the time for State investments to support not only a regional approach to meeting the unique needs of our most complex youth including investment in the infrastructure to provide a strong continuum of care ranging from prevention to secure detention. In alignment with the recommendations of the Working Group on Youth Interventions, this legislation establishes a regional approach that addresses the overlapping juvenile justice and human services systems, provides placement and treatment options across the continuum, and helps counties leverage their individual and collective assets to identify gaps and develop solutions.

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:

- forming a legislative task force to revise and update Minn. R. 2960,
- addressing placement options for youth,
- removing a moratorium on new beds for foster care homes, and
- implementing the rate study recommendations for non-residential youth programming.

Scott County is deeply involved and committed to the regional framework. We firmly believe this approach will meet the needs of these youth and their families. I urge you to support this effort, as we work together to meet the needs of Minnesota's youth.

Sincerely,

Dave Beer
Chair, Scott County Board of Commissioners