



Minnesota Alliance of Rural Addiction Treatment Programs

February 19, 2025

Dear Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

The Minnesota Alliance of Rural Addiction Treatment Programs (MARATP) is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization that seeks to bring together diverse rural interests to address and advocate for strong addiction treatment programs throughout Greater Minnesota. Formed in 2017, MARATP advocates for legislation and policies that strengthen the health and well-being of rural Minnesotans, and improve rural access to higher quality, lower cost health care. We are writing you today to provide our comments on Gov. Walz's budget recommendations and the impact on rural substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers across the state.

First, MARATP would like to express our immense disappointment in the absence of SUD or broader behavioral health services rate increases while there are general fund dollars on the bottom line. While we understand the difficulties the November forecast presents for significant, ongoing investments in Medical Assistance (MA), it was disheartening to see billions of dollars left unappropriated. A recent rate study commissioned by the Department of Human Services (DHS) noted how significantly MA rates for SUD and mental health services fall below the cost of providing care. Inadequate funding, along with workforce shortages, leads to lower access to care for Minnesotans. This crisis is especially prevalent in rural Minnesota where resources are already much more limited. MARATP members are committed to serving those in need of services, but providers continue to struggle to meet the growing demand. Minnesotans, especially those in Greater Minnesota, need SUD and behavioral health services rate increases to be a priority of this committee.

Second, MARATP would like to express its support for the proposed change to the Housing Support program that would create better, more uniform access to state housing dollars for certified recovery residences. We all know the importance of stable housing to an individual's recovery and believe the ability for more providers to access Housing Support funds will simplify and disentangle the various workarounds that have become untenable from a regulatory compliance perspective. The ability for certified recovery residences to access Housing Support agreements directly from DHS is a significant step forward. This will not only ensure stable housing for those in recovery, and therefore more success in recovery, but it will separate an individual's ability to access housing from the time they may spend in a treatment program.

Lastly, we appreciate the attention DHS and Gov. Walz has paid to program integrity and fraud prevention in the proposed budget. MARATP is committed to ensuring that the limited resources available for SUD treatment are appropriately employed to the greatest extent possible. We do have questions, however, as to whether additional resources for investigators to operate under the same practices and authorities previously will improve program integrity and we want to make sure that as the Legislature considers providing DHS additional authority, it also ensures due process for providers. We look forward to the release of the bill language for such proposals and continued discussion throughout the legislative session.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and your support of the recovery community.

Sincerely,
Marti Paulson, President
Minnesota Alliance of Rural Addiction Treatment Programs