

Honorable Senators Hoffman and Abeler, Committee Members:

I am writing in support of SF1827 which would allow individuals with DWI charges and convictions who are income eligible for MA or for the Minnesota Behavioral Health Fund to access those resources to pay for their chemical health assessment.

My name is Salena Beasley and over the last year I have worked with Paperwork Reduction and Systems Improvement Committee. One desirable goal of Systems Improvement is to make treatment more accessible to Minnesotans with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) who need treatment.

The Comprehensive Assessment (CA) is the doorway to accessing these funds, not only for the assessment, but also for the treatment itself. It makes no sense to charge Minnesotans who need treatment that is evidenced by a DWI for an assessment that would be paid for for them had they identified the possible need for treatment in any other manner. Initially, this causes the person charged with a DWI to delay or avoid the assessment, thus for many of them, delaying the start of much needed treatment. Worse than that though, some Counties, such as Beltrami County where I live, have taken this law as a reason to deny eligibility for Medicaid and Behavioral Health Fund resources. This causes further delay in the funding for treatment, which the existing law to be amended here does not restrict for DWI offenders.

While punishment may sometimes be appropriate, the Court has other tools, such as fines, with which it can implement that purpose. Punishment should never appear as a barrier to accessing the Comprehensive Assessment and SUD treatment a Minnesotan may need in order to obey the law in the future, to recover a desirable lifestyle, and to protect others around the individual both from their bad driving practices while intoxicated and from other harms to which SUD may lead.

Please remove this barrier to treatment by passing SF1827.

Miigwetch, (Thank you)

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