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DATE February 21, 2022
TO Behavioral Health Policy Division
FROM Pahoua K. Yang, MSSW, PhD, LICSW, LP
Vice President, Community Mental Health & Wellness
Wilder Foundation

HF 3215 Community Mental Health Emergency Workforce Supports

Chair Fischer and Committee Members:

Wilder has provided community mental health care for nearly 100 years. We have always understood that **our services are only possible through the people we employ** – this makes workforce development one of our highest priorities. This is especially important when serving a culturally and ethnically diverse community, as we do. Sufficiently staffing quality providers is difficult enough, finding culturally and ethnically responsive providers that are reflective of our community, is next to impossible.

Over the last 30 years, we have made substantial strides in training, supporting, and licensing providers to serve our community mental health clients. But right now, in the face of COVID burnout and massive competition, we are losing these critical providers.

This represents a huge loss to our clients, who deserve providers who understand their worldview and speak their language. It also undermines our ability to continue providing critical services – with jobs posted for weeks, or months, going unfilled.

Unlike many, this issue is simple.

We need immediate support to remain relevant in the behavioral health hiring landscape. We need your help to retain the passionate and brilliant providers who are dedicated to this difficult work. We need to recruit new providers to fight back our waitlists and get our kids and families the services they are seeking. Otherwise, they will wait, deteriorate, and end up in emergency rooms and hospitals. An outcome that is both tragic, and incredibly cost ineffective for the community.

Our providers have been here for the community for nearly a century, they are not equipped to continue doing this without urgent support. We must offer competitive compensation, incentives, and support to keep providers engaged in this challenging work.

Please demonstrate that you are committed to a functional community mental health system in Minnesota by voting for HF 3215.

Thank you,

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