THERAPEUTIC SERVICES AGENCY Inc.
Hope Realized
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March 16, 2026

Dear Senator Burke,

I am writing in support of SF4388 and SF 4018. As a mental health service provider and professional in the field of mental health services delivery for 45 years, I can say unequivocally that our system of care has eroded away in the past 10 years. I continue to be amazed that here in MN, we have fewer resources dedicated to mental health for our children and their families than I have experienced in the entirety of my career. Seeing children and teens linger in emergency rooms and detention centers because of their needs and lack of access to the levels of care and services they really need is so disturbing and upsetting for them, their families, and is not good for our broad MN community. We can do better than this. Please support these bills as they are presented in committee and along the legislative journey. Key benefits of these bills:

- Codifies the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grant (a priority area of work supporting early identification, skill development and sustained access to childcare)
- Eliminates barriers for highly acute children to be cared for (by establishing a prudent parenting standard to support children living in group homes)
- Builds further alignment across community-based mental health (consistently defining skills group size)
- Allow direct access to skills training to manage mental health symptoms
- Updates Youth ACT to expand impact of this team-based service that helps children with acute mental health needs stay in the community

Kids and families need access to the right level of care and services and not malingering and taking up beds in emergency rooms and detention centers. I will appreciate your support as well as families and kids in MN!

Respectfully,

Cheryl Smetana McHugh, MSW, LICSW

Executive Chair