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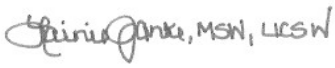
To: Chair Wicklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Date: March 16, 2026
RE: SF4388
FROM: Lainie Janke, MSW, LICSW – Executive Director



Dear Honorable Chair Wicklund and Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee-

I am writing to encourage your support for SF4388, which takes important steps to strengthen access to critical children's mental health services in Minnesota. Families across our state are facing a growing crisis as children with significant mental health needs struggle to access timely, appropriate care. When services are unavailable, children often end up boarding in hospitals or entering detention settings simply because the right supports do not exist in the community. SF4388 offers meaningful solutions that will help address these gaps.

One key provision of this bill codifies the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grant. This program plays a vital role in supporting early identification of mental health needs, building skills among caregivers and educators, and sustaining access to child care environments where children can thrive. By strengthening early intervention, we can address challenges before they escalate into more serious crises.

SF4388 also removes barriers that prevent highly acute children from receiving appropriate care in group home settings. Establishing a prudent parenting standard allows caregivers in these environments to make everyday decisions that support normalcy, safety, and stability for the children in their care. This change helps ensure that children with complex needs can still experience supportive, developmentally appropriate environments.

The bill further improves alignment across community-based mental health services by consistently defining skills group size. This clarity helps providers deliver services more effectively and ensures programs can operate in ways that meet children's needs while maintaining high-quality standards.

Another important provision allows direct access to skills training for managing mental health symptoms. Removing unnecessary barriers to this type of support enables children and families to receive practical tools sooner, helping them stabilize and succeed in home, school, and community settings.

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Finally, the bill updates Youth ACT to expand the reach and effectiveness of this team-based service model. Youth ACT teams provide intensive, coordinated care for young people with acute mental health needs, helping them remain safely in their communities rather than entering more restrictive or institutional settings.

Together, these provisions strengthen Minnesota's continuum of children's mental health care—from early identification and prevention to intensive community-based services. Supporting SF4388 will help reduce hospital boarding, prevent unnecessary involvement with detention systems, and ensure that children receive the care they need in the least restrictive and most supportive environments possible.

Thank you for your commitment to the well-being of Minnesota's children and families. I urge you to support SF4388 and continue investing in solutions that expand access to timely, effective mental health care.