March 8, 2017

Chair Joe Schomacker

Health and Human Services Reform Committee

Minnesota House of Representatives

RE: Support for HF 1561

Dear Chair Schomacker and Committee Members—

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to support HF 1561 (Hamilton) to allow mental health practitioners to provide telemedicine services and eliminate medical assistance limits on telemedicine encounters.

I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of the Minnesota Health Care Safety Net Coalition (SNC). The SNC represents nonprofit provider organizations who serve primarily low-income, disadvantaged and uninsured patients with complex personal, social, economic and cultural challenges compared to Minnesota’s general population. The Coalition brings together all sectors of health care who serve these patients including primary care, mental health, substance abuse, dental, hospital and specialty care.

Telemedicine is a valuable, cost-effective alternative vehicle for delivering a range of mental health and other health care services, especially to those who are geographically dispersed or experience other barriers to accessing care in a traditional setting. The current statute allows mental health professionals to provide care by telemedicine in certain situations, which, we believe, has increased access for low-income and rural Minnesotans and others who experience barriers to accessing care. Expanding this service delivery method to trained mental health practitioners under supervision of a mental health professional and removing the limit on the allowable number of telehealth visits will further improve access to Minnesotans who might not otherwise have access to any mental health services.

For these reasons, the Health Care Safety Net Coalition supports Representative Hamilton’s HF 1561 to modify the current telemedicine statute.

Please feel free to contact me with additional questions,

Michael Scandrett

Executive Director