

May 9, 2022

Members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Conference Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing to share our support for many of the provisions in this year's judiciary and public safety omnibus bills. We want to thank you for continuing to raise mental health as a critical issue in your committees this session. We know that access to mental health care and supports creates healthier communities.

We support these provisions that are in both the House and Senate versions:

- \$50 million to fully fund our **public defenders**.
- Funding for **Youth Intervention Program** grants.
- **Community supervision:** We support funding in both versions of the bill for our community supervision system. We also support the policy language to create a new funding formula for our probation providers in the House language. As your committees have discussed many times this session, Minnesota has failed to meet its statutory requirements on funding community supervision for years now. NAMI participated in giving feedback to the recent Governor's Council on Justice Reinvestment which was co-chaired by Sen. Rosen. Mental health is very often a critical element in people successfully completing probation sentences. A more sustainable funding formula like the one proposed in the House language would open opportunities for people with mental illnesses to be on special mental health caseloads and to have the focused attention they need to live well in the community.

In addition to the items above, we support the funding for **first responder wellness in the Senate version of SF 2673**: We know first responders experience a disproportionate amount of trauma as part of their work duties and we strongly support these investments to offer the specialized support that first responders need. We know this is particularly important for law enforcement officers who often are reluctant to seek help for their mental health.

We support these provisions in the House version of SF 2673:

- **Free phone calls to in jail:** We're grateful for the inclusion of this NAMI bill. Providing free phone calls from inmates to therapists, case managers, insurance navigators, and the Minnesota Warmline is one easy way to increase access to treatment and support for incarcerated people, which we believe will have positive ripple effects into our court system all the way through to community supervision.

- **Juvenile Justice:** Even before the pandemic, youth mental health was in a difficult place – now we are in a crisis. While we are working to address the crisis and build our children’s mental health system, the juvenile justice system is often the default for youth who need treatment. We support these juvenile justice provisions:
 - Funding for Crossover and Dual-status Youth Model grants.
 - Funding for various Youth Development grants, Alternatives to Juvenile Detention Conflict Resolution Centers, Youth Intervention Programs, Juvenile Protection Services, and mental health services for juveniles.
 - The Task Force on a Coordinated Approach to Juvenile Wellness and Justice.
 - Banning strip searches, disciplinary room time, and life without parole for youth.
 - Raising the age of detention from 10 to 13.
- **Support for incarcerated people and families:** We strongly support the funding for the Family Support Unit and the funding to increase communication between incarcerated people and family and support people. We also support the funding for education, employment, and work release for incarcerated people, and the Healing House for Native women.
- **Community safety:** We support funding for the Minnesota Heals program, trauma recovery centers for victims of crimes, the First Responder Wellness Office, and Local Community Innovation Grants for mobile mental health crisis teams and juvenile diversion. We do hope that the funding for mobile mental health crisis services will be used to build on our current system.
- **Judiciary and legal:** We support the investments in civil legal defense to ensure the rights of people with disabilities are protected. We support the funding for psychological services for examinations in the court system. We support lowering punishment for small cannabis crimes and allowing for expungement. We support the language clarifying that the Ombuds for Corrections may only be removed for good cause.

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues. Please reach out to us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

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Criminal Justice Coordinator