



MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

March 18, 2024

Chair Fue Lee
Capital Investment Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives

RE: State Agency Overviews of Governor's 2024 bonding recommendations – DHS provisions

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members,

The Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) thanks you for your commitment to investing in the capital projects across Minnesota that are essential to ensuring Minnesota's bright future. MACSSA appreciates the Governor's 2024 bonding recommendations for the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Direct Care and Treatment (DCT). We offer this letter as an extension of initial conversations with DHS, Governor's human services policy staff, and DCT staff and to call out the urgent need for additional capacity in DCT facilities.

MACSSA thanks the Governor for including in his capital budget asset preservation for across the DCT system. As the entity that serves those with complex needs in situations where private providers cannot or will not serve, counties see DCT as an essential partner in our state's mental and behavioral health continuum of care. DCT is the safety net that our state relies on to provide the facilities and expertise needed for individuals with high acuity complex needs that cannot be served in the community. Funding St. Peter's Water and Sewer Construction also ensures this essential capacity is maintained long term.

Counties respectfully ask for the committee to consider additional infrastructure investments at DCT, such as the Miller Building Remodel preliminary budget request proposal. Last session, the Governor included a capital budget recommendation for the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) to remodel the north and south wings of the Miller building, which was not funded. The 2024 Preliminary Capital Budget Requests included \$50 million for a Miller Building Remodel. The Priority Admissions Task Force Report released this February recommends, as its first recommendation, to "Immediately Begin to Increase Direct Care and Treatment Capacity and Access". This could provide relief to hospitals and jails which are holding individuals awaiting the specialized treatment of DCT. The recommendations of the task force also highlighted that any change to the Priority Admissions law must occur simultaneously to or following the immediate increase in capacity at DCT

Direct Care and Treatment serves as Minnesota's safety net and it has a unique role to meet the needs of our hardest to serve individuals in Minnesota. Counties are committed to working with the leadership at DHS and DCT and other community partners and stakeholders to determine how to invest in and meet capacity needs in community and in our state operated services. Much work remains ahead of the legislature before DCT stands alone as its own agency. Counties seek to be a participant in the conversations around key issues about this key state infrastructure.

Lastly, MACSSA also wants to thank the Governor for including the DHS recommended capital investment grants for Early Childhood Facilities. Ensuring access to quality early childhood facilities across our state is a priority strongly echoed by counties. Counties, such as Stevens County, have innovated by investing in and implemented unique models to support expansion of facilities for childcare and to support early learners. Ensuring safe and accessible spaces are available across our state supports our workforce and community needs.

While MACSSA most often focuses our advocacy on human services policy and general fund spending, rarely bringing forward legislation around capital investments beyond recent support to fund regional mental health crisis centers, we feel this DCT capacity issue is too important not to advocate for additional capital investment with your committee. The systemic impact of the state attending to DCT's need for additional capacity would allow it to better address DCT's core mission and could provide needed relief on the stressed jail and hospital systems, where people are currently languishing without access to appropriate health care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Freeman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Freeman
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators