



Representative Jennifer Schultz, Chair  
Human Services Policy & Finance Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
February 24, 2021

Dear Chair Schultz and Committee Members,

I am sending this letter to support Representative Vang's House File 970 - Culturally informed behavioral health training requirements and culturally diverse workforce development support.

Guild is a service provider in the metro area, we offer integrated mental health, housing, and employment services to individuals living with mental illness and/or experiencing chronic homelessness.

Our staff are key/ critical to our ability to provide high quality care to our clients and communities. Our entire behavioral health system is facing a workforce crisis, with more providers retiring than are coming into the field. The shortage is particularly true for our communities of color, whose members face even more barriers to accessing care and inequities. Guild supports HF 970's proposal to further diversify our workforce through more diversity training and increased funding/ investment into education and training supports to allow more students and workers communities of color to enter the mental health workforce.

Most importantly, the bill –

- convenes a workgroup to address barriers in the current professional licensure process and consider an alternative licensure pathway.
- expands the definition of a mental health practitioner to include students completing internships while in their programs (graduate or undergraduate). This way students, particularly non-traditional students with families and children, do not have to choose between completing their degree and making wages to feed their families. This also allows agencies to hire more mental health practitioners, under a wider net of eligibility.

All the proposals in HF 970 are a first step, but an important first step, to bringing more diverse staff candidates into the mental and chemical health fields. Thank you for your consideration and support of the mental health care needs of our diverse communities and our mental health care system in Minnesota. Please support House File 970.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Bluhm', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julie Bluhm, CEO