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Dear Members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we would like to express our support for HF 269. This important legislation would create a psychology interjurisdictional compact that will make it easier for people with mental illnesses to receive treatment via telemedicine. While this legislation was a priority for NAMI Minnesota before the COVID-19 pandemic, the stress of social isolation and distance learning has significantly increased the demand for mental health treatment and especially telemedicine.

More people than ever need mental health treatment, but the development of our mental health workforce is still lagging. Low reimbursement rates, hurdles to obtaining licensure, and challenges finding a supervisor are all key factors in our long-term workforce challenges. We need to tackle these problems, but HF 269 is an important start that will rapidly expand the pool of psychologists that can provide treatment in our state and to Minnesotans in other states.

As more mental health services are offered remotely, there have been new logistical hurdles for both providers and patients. The compact will allow psychologists to practice across state lines and in under-served communities, while ensuring that these providers are qualified to provide mental health treatment. We have heard many stories from our members about the disruptions in care when someone moves to a new state. College students, for example, could not continue receiving support from their psychologists while they are in school in another state. This legislation would also allow for someone to meet with their psychologist while traveling or caring for a relative in another state.

We understand that there are concerns from trial lawyers that it may inconvenience them to file a suit in federal rather than state courts. This inconvenience pales in light of the inconvenience caused by not being able to continue treatment with your current psychologist because you moved to another state for college, a job, or to help elderly parents. According to the CDC, 40% of adults reported struggling with their mental health or a substance use disorder and just over 10% of respondents reported seriously considering suicide in the previous 30 days. Black and Latinx respondents reported higher rates of substance use and suicidal ideation than white respondents, while young children with mental illnesses need help as well. More people than ever are struggling with mental illnesses and their symptoms are more acute. The legislature must prioritize the urgent needs of people with mental illnesses over the convenience of some attorneys in the state.

The psychology interjurisdictional compact will increase access to mental health services, reduce the logistical burden for mental health providers to offer services across state lines and provide an urgently needed expansion to our mental health workforce. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH Sam Smith

Executive Director Public Policy Coordinator