



Representative Peter Fischer, Chair
Behavioral Health Subdivision
MN House of Representatives
February 22, 2022
Chair Fischer and Members of the Committee

On behalf of Washburn Center for Children, I am writing to express strong support for **House File 3215 – emergency funding for mental health workforce relief using federal relief funding.**

Community Mental Health Centers are Minnesota’s mental health safety net. Over 30 nonprofits provide community-based mental health services for over 250,000 Minnesotans in every county across the state. Most clients are experiencing financial hardship and qualify for Medical Assistance or sliding fee scales, so CMHC’s provide millions of dollars worth of uncompensated care each year. We provide community-based care so people can get the mental health support they need in their community, in their school, in their home – without having to be hospitalized or go into residential treatment. This approach is therapeutically and financially effective. But this safety net cannot continue absorbing the massive ongoing financial losses caused by the covid-19 pandemic and workforce crisis for much longer.

Washburn Center for Children is a Community Mental Health Center providing school, home and community-based therapeutic services for nearly 4,000 children from birth through 18 and their 12,000 family members across the Twin Cities metro and statewide training for over 700 clinical interns, parents and professionals each year. We provide affordable access to care for the 75% of families we serve who are experiencing financial hardship. In 2021, the number of families qualifying for our sliding fee scale doubled, and we provided over \$400,000 in uncompensated care. Ongoing covid disruptions drove a \$1.5M operating loss. Community Mental Health Centers cannot continue to absorb this level of financial loss for much longer.

Please support investment of this one-time ARPA immediate relief funding to sustain Minnesota’s safety net mental health system of care. Washburn Center for Children urgently asks the Committee to support access to community-based mental and chemical health care for all Minnesotans by passing H.F. 3215.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom S.", is positioned above the typed name.

Tom Steinmetz, CEO

