



Dear Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota is writing to strongly support HF1198 which is the Mental Health Legislative Network's children's mental health bill. It contains important provisions to address the crisis facing our children.

One of the provisions I want to highlight for the committee is the child care for parents who live with a mental illness. MFIP Child Only cases are when the parent is considered as having a disability by the Social Security Administration. Thus, they don't receive income for themselves through MFIP, only their child(ren) does. Because they have a disability, they are not required to work. This means that they also don't qualify for childcare assistance.

Sometimes that disability is actually a mental illness. We know that symptoms can fluctuate with a mental illness and that recovery is not a straight line. If a parent is struggling with their mental health and needs more intensive treatment – such as day treatment or intensive outpatient – and they don't have a responsible adult to take care of their child while in treatment they are left with undesirable choices. The reality is that we want them to access treatment and we need to support them with childcare so that they can attend these programs.

We also want to be sure that children are with adults who can respond to their needs. In the throes of depression or other mental illnesses the parent may be unable to respond consistently. During these times we want the child to be in child care to obtain that consistency and to give the parent a break where they can focus on treatment.

This bill would pay for childcare in these situations when recommended by a mental health professional. We urge your support for this bill so we can support parents who may be struggling with their mental health and support health child development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director



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