



*An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth*

Dear Representative Backer and Mrs. Abderholden,

Thank you for attending the Minnesota Youth Council Committee meeting held March 27, 2018, and for detailing House File 960. The committee voted overwhelmingly to support your legislation to appropriate funds toward school-linked mental health programs with 22 votes in the affirmative and 1 vote in the negative.

There were many aspects of the bill that the MYCC believe will positively impact students as well as the general community within Minnesota. First, there was large support for the individualisation of the program, as this will ensure that funds are not only being appropriated to schools in general, but will actually create programs that will assist individual students. Additionally, the MYCC thought that the adaptable format of the legislation will ensure that there are no loopholes. Part of this is targeting low poverty schools, as those are the areas where students with mental health issues are often not receiving assistance. Such flexibility in the legislation will ensure that the bill has a large impact both in magnitude and effectiveness and is also proactive rather than reactive.

The Committee also has a few recommendations for this bill. First, the bill would benefit from having a larger focus on rural schools. Many members of the MYCC attend or attended a rural school, and these schools often have a lack of resources to help students in the field of mental health. Additionally, the MYCC found some ambiguity regarding how the funding and grants will be equitably distributed. We would recommend more specificity in language to ensure that the resources reach students regardless of sexuality, race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. One recommendation given by the MYCC would be to ensure that those who administer the service are diversified, as this would make the resources and staff more approachable for all students.

We look forward to seeing this legislation prosper and help students throughout the state, and the MYCC is honored to have given our input. Thank you for this opportunity, and we hope to work with you again in the future!

Sincerely,

The Minnesota Youth Council Committee