



*An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth*

Dear Ms. Abderholden and Ms. Kolkind,

Thank you so much for presenting Senate File 01 to the Minnesota Youth Council Committee Legislative hearing on Friday, April 26, 2019. We very much appreciate the time you put towards listening to youth and our feedback on the legislation. The MYCC voted in favor of this bill.

We appreciate the intent and efforts that have been made in the process of this bill's creation. We care about the goals and issues presented in this bill and would like to share our observations and feedback regarding the bill. Though we support the intention of the bill, we believe that this piece of legislation would be better suited if it were incorporated into an omnibus bill or divided into multiple bills. The inclusion of multiple policy ideas in a singular piece of legislation prevents them from all being addressed thoroughly. Some of these policy issues are inherently multifaceted and demand an individual legislative approach.

While the bill makes incredible strides in the provision of mental health care in colleges, the help comes a little too late since about 50 percent of mental illness cases begin by age 14. Students in high school are most vulnerable for developing anxiety and depression, and by the time they begin college, they have missed out on crucial help, leaving them without healthy coping mechanisms for their emotional exertions. The bill doesn't comprehensively provide mental health care in high schools so that the care is more accessible for students who need it the most.

One concern that was raised among MYCC members was that the large amounts of money being allocated to different grants and programs in the bill are not sustainable. The money only temporarily funds such programs, and it is necessary that we create a long term plan that includes self-sustaining initiatives. One alternative approach includes the creation of jobs for mental health professionals in every corner of the state along with incentives to attract such people to Minnesota. Additionally, funds could be used to improve and expand infrastructure and facilities for mental health patients, especially in cities across Greater Minnesota.

A concern of many of the members who live in Greater Minnesota was the effectiveness it would have in rural areas. The technology many patients of all ages currently have access to is often not sufficient for something such as telemedicine to be a main applicator of care. Additionally, a problem is created when large ambitious plans like these are meant to be implemented uniformly around the state, despite that the infrastructure of the mental health system in rural Minnesota is extremely small or in some cases non-existent. We worry that having a large sum of money like that suggested at the hearing would be going to waste, because the fundamentals necessary for this plan would not be there. A suggestion to help address this issue was to create a separate plan to incentivise the creation and training for mental health professional careers in rural Minnesota.

Thank you for taking the time to present this bill to the Minnesota Youth Council Committee. We appreciate your support in mental health support and advocacy in students, and we look forward to hearing more on this bill and continuing to support it.

Sincerely,  
Minnesota Youth Council