



May 3, 2019

### For Immediate Release

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Minnesota Community Care convened a community conversation with Senator Tina Smith about access to mental health support for students. This was an opportunity to help inform the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019 as authored by Sen. Tina Smith. The event was held at Saint Paul Public School's Johnson Aerospace & Engineering Senior High, where the Senator toured a school based clinic and visited a health classroom. Meaningful conversation with allied community partners, parents and school support staff brought to light what is working and emerging to support the mental health journey of youth. Media students [interviewed Senator Smith](#) about her work impacting adolescent well-being.

In her words, **“Providing mental health services at school is common sense—reaching students where they are—and would be a big help for parents and educators while making sure students in Minnesota and across the country have access to the care they need to succeed. It was great to see the work being done to increase mental health supports for students at Johnson High School, whose model I am pushing for in Washington, D.C. so that schools nationwide can follow their lead.”**

A parent shared the benefits of the support her son was able to access at a school-based clinic while they were navigating trauma and grief from the loss of several family members. Providers reinforced the need for culturally specific care and ethnically diverse support. Allied partners and school district staff spoke to the need for further funding to expand school-based mental health programs that have a positive impact on school climate, student engagement and academic achievement.

Shawna Hedlund, Director of Health Access at Minnesota Community Care, expressed “School-based health has a long history of fostering wellness and ensuring health equity that improves learning. This bill strengthens collaboration between schools and community partners in mental health care, enabling communities to provide the ideal conditions for children and youth to connect, learn and grow.”

### What should you do?

- 1** Support the [Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019](#). The bill expands opportunities for licensed mental health professional who work in schools to participate in the National Health Services Core, builds partnerships for advancing mental health training in communities, and identifies best practices for meeting the mental health needs of students.
- 2** Connect with our community partners in wellness support for youth and children, including [Braided Journeys](#), [Wilder Foundation](#), [Washburn Center for Children](#), [North Point Health and Wellness](#) and Minnesota's other [Community Health Centers](#), [MN Association for Community Mental Health Programs](#) and [MN Association for Children's Mental Health](#).
- 3** Engage us - we encourage parents, students and school staff to contact [Minnesota Community Care](#) to learn more about our services for students in St. Paul Public Schools.

The mission of Minnesota Community Care is to strengthen the well-being of our community through healthcare for all. I want to thank the many Minnesota Community Care team members who took the time to organize and execute this event. We could not have accomplished it without Shawna Hedlund, our Director of Health Access, who has spent over 20 years advocating for the health and well-being of youth.