To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Tammy Dramstad, MSW, CSW-PIP and I have had the privilege of working for Community Counseling Services for the past 20 years. I am passionate about serving the historically disadvantaged individuals that we encounter every week. Without CMHC’s many of these individuals would not be able to access services due to not having insurance or co-pays being too high.

I am concerned regarding the trend that I have seen unfolding in the last eight years. We are training high quality therapists, however, once they receive their license they are moving on to Private Practice. These individuals share that they are leaving for a variety of reasons such as being able to work part time and make the same salary as a full-time employee at CCS. They are leaving because the amount of State paperwork has become burdensome on therapists leading to burnout. And that is on top of the documents we complete to help clients achieve a better quality of life. For example, yesterday I completed a 20 page form regarding a review of a client’s symptoms in order for them to continue to receive disability. This is vitally important, but the 2.5 hours I spend on this task is non-billable for the CMHC’s. These tasks are not the exception, rather the norm for working with individuals who are diagnosed with severe mental illness and are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Clients often experience a renewal of trauma symptoms when their therapist leaves for Private Practice as they have to adjust to another therapist. This can be challenging as our clients come to us with attachment issues, fears of abandonment, and overall fears related to the symptoms they are experiencing. The last concern, I would like to highlight is that we work in a significantly rural area. It is difficult to recruit new therapists, as many therapists want the advantages that come with living in an urban environment such as cultural events, concerts, retail shopping and more. I am worried that if CMHC’s do not receive a rate increase of 16 percent we will not be able to recruit and retain therapists leading to significant wait lists for treatment. To summarize, as I stated earlier I am passionate about serving our clients. But sadly we cannot do so without being able to recruit or retain the high quality therapists we so desperately need. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Dramstad, MSW, CSW-PIP

Out Patient Therapist.