

February 24, 2022

To: Committee Chair Senator Paul Utke, Vice Chair Senator Rich Draheim, and the entire Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

RE: Support for Bed Moratorium Exception for 22 Pediatric Behavioral Health Beds - SF 3257

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Dear Committee Chair Senator Utke, Vice Chair Senator Draheim, and the entire Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH), I am writing today in support of SF 3257, which would provide a bed moratorium exception for the 22-bed inpatient mental health unit within the Children's Minnesota St. Paul hospital.

Here in Minnesota, the state of children's mental health is in crisis. The Minnesota Student Survey shows that the most significant number of students (23%) report having long-term mental, behavioral and emotional challenges.

While rates of depression and anxiety were on the rise before 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these trends. According to the Centers for Disease Control, emergency department visits for potential suicide attempts among teens were up 40 – 50 percent in 2021 compared to 2019. Statewide, hospitals see their largest-ever volume of young people visiting emergency rooms for overdoses, suicide attempts, and other mental health crises.

As rates of mental health challenges continue to soar, our state's lack of access to inpatient mental health services makes it increasingly challenging to meet the needs of our children and teens. This crisis requires urgent action, and we believe Children's Minnesota is uniquely positioned to respond.

I urge the Health Finance & Policy Committee to pass SF 3257, which will expand access to inpatient mental health care for children and teens, help relieve the burden on our state's emergency departments and support the overall health of our communities.

Sincerely,



Brandon Jones, MA
Executive Director
Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health
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