



March 30, 2022
Senate Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Dear Chair Utke and Committee Members,

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, thank you for including our request for 22 additional mental health beds in the Health and Human Services (HHS) Policy Omnibus, SF4198. These beds are a crucial step in addressing the mental health crisis among our kids.

Children's Minnesota is the state's largest pediatric provider of health care, seeing over 135,000 patients last year alone. We serve an incredibly diverse patient population and 46 percent of our patients are insured through Medicaid. In addition to the behavioral health services we already provide, this fall Children's Minnesota is opening an inpatient mental health unit in our St. Paul hospital. In 2021, we had to transfer over 850 patients to other facilities for inpatient mental health care. This new unit will ensure that kids with acute mental health needs and complex medical conditions will be able to receive high-quality, comprehensive care at Children's Minnesota.

Additional beds are needed because we are responding to a crisis, one that was not originally part of our long-term planning. Children's Minnesota has already planned for needed expansions in key specialty programs that were otherwise delayed because of the pandemic, including cardiovascular, neurosurgery, cancer care and infusion, and eating disorder services. Without 22 additional bed licenses, Children's Minnesota will have to open this new mental health unit at the expense of being able to meet volume surges and community needs in other specialty programs.

With this new unit, Children's Minnesota will be able to increase access to desperately needed acute mental health care while addressing current mental health disparities and improving mental health outcomes.

At Children's Minnesota, our vision is to be every family's essential partner in raising healthier children. As the kid experts in our community, it is our goal to improve the health and wellbeing of kids in our state, especially when it comes to supporting their mental health. Thank you for including this important provision in the HHS Policy Omnibus.

Sincerely,

Amanda Jansen, MPP
Director of Public Policy
Children's Minnesota