



March 14, 2023

Dear Lawmakers,

We are writing on behalf of Essentia Health and the Bob Tavani House for Medical Respite in support of HF 2081/SF 1951, Medicaid support for recuperative care services.

Recuperative care, also called “Medical Respite”, provides support services to patients that are at risk or experiencing homelessness and would otherwise be discharged to the street – without another option to heal and seek solutions for recuperation and long-term health. Essentia Health and Bob Tavani House for Medical Respite work together to support healing and long-term success for patients facing these challenges and would appreciate the support of lawmakers for this important proposal.

Essentia Health is an integrated 501c3 healthcare system headquartered in Duluth (St. Louis County), MN, we’re privileged to serve more than a million patients, more than half of whom live in rural areas. In Duluth specifically, there were over 1,200 homeless households in 2020 with almost two thirds having a chronic health condition or disability. Of these, it’s estimated that at least 36% have a diagnosed mental health issue and more than 31% struggle with substance use disorder. Additionally, about half of individuals utilizing shelters due to housing insecurity were persons of color.

Since the Bob Tavani House opened its doors in 2018, Essentia has referred 36 patients experiencing homelessness who were not sick enough to remain in the hospital but, lacked a safe and hygienic place to be discharged to support recovery. We have seen firsthand the impact and the value of recuperative care evidenced by more than half of all patients referred to Bob Tavani House for Medical Respite being eventually placed in stable housing, which is fundamental for breaking the cycle of homelessness.

This legislation provides an incredible opportunity to support a stable, long-term funding solution for health and healing of our most vulnerable community members. We are eager to expand capacity for medical respite/recuperative care to meet the needs of homeless members of our community and funding would be foundational to that effort.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable Minnesotans.

Sincerely

Dr. Cathy Cantor
Chief Medical Officer, Population Health
Essentia Health

Dr. Anthony Olson
Board Chair, Bob Tavani House for Medical Respite
Bob Tavani House for Medical Respite