



The Kid Experts™

March 31, 2023  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, I am writing to offer comments on several provisions in SF2995, the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus bill. Children's Minnesota is the state's largest pediatric health care provider, seeing over 165,000 patients last year alone. We serve children and teens from all 87 counties and 60 percent of the counties in surrounding states. Nearly half of our patients are insured through Medicaid. Because of the diversity of patients we see, we understand the unique and varied challenges Minnesota children face.

SF2995 includes several important provisions that would benefit the patients and families we serve:

- Improving transparency and processes of the Drug Formulary Committee.
- Removing prior authorization requirements for liquid methadone. This medication is used to provide comfort to kids receiving hospice and palliative care, and to treat babies born dependent on opioids, avoiding hospital stays for serious withdrawal symptoms.
- Ensuring inpatient hospital fee-for-service Medicaid rates are rebased using current costs and inflationary trends.
- Continuous Medicaid eligibility for children through age 6- and 12-month continuous eligibility for children ages 19 and under.
- Ensuring Medical Education and Research Costs (MERC) funding continues under a new mechanism. Because this is new, we encourage the committee to include hold harmless language to avoid unintended funding reductions.
- Children in our state are in the midst of a mental health crisis which has led many families to seek care for their child in a hospital emergency department. Often, these kids do not need hospital level care but there are not spaces available in community, residential or home settings. Kids therefore end up boarding in hospitals, waiting sometimes weeks or even months for space to open in the right care setting. We support the included investments in kids' mental health:
  - A 35 percent increase in outpatient mental health rates while DHS continues to study long term increases to these rates.
  - Workforce investments including mental health professional scholarships and the pediatric primary care mental health training grant program.
  - Capacity building funds to support PRTFs who treat and accept individuals with complex support needs, including support for evidenced-based, culturally appropriate curriculums and training programs for staff and clients.

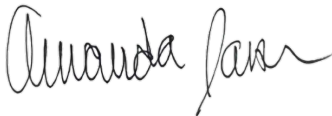
We also hope the committee will consider concerns we have with the following:

- While Children's Minnesota supports the nursing loan forgiveness program, mental health supports and workplace violence prevention components of the Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act, we remain very concerned about the current staffing provisions in the bill. Children's Minnesota and the Minnesota Nurses Association recently agreed to a new contract that included new and improved staffing committee structures and processes that give bedside nurses more of a voice on staffing. The contract also included a commitment to collaborative problem solving in the areas of patient boarding, workplace violence and diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Additional investments in respite care are urgently needed for children and families who have utilized crisis services, emergency room services or experienced a loss of in-home staffing support.
- Increased funding is needed for culturally responsive school-linked mental health services and early childhood mental health services and consultation .

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, we appreciate the opportunity to partner with you to collectively improve the health and wellbeing of kids in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Jansen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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