



Minnesota Hospital Association

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Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) and the patients that our 141 hospital and health system members across the state serve, we write to you today in strong support of SF 4664 (Mann) to bolster children's mental health services.

Hospitals and health systems across Minnesota are dedicated to addressing the unprecedented mental health crisis and providing the most appropriate care to patients, including children. Without continued policy emphasis and additional funding, access to mental health services will remain inadequate; available mental health providers will be insufficient; and the struggles to find appropriate, effective, convenient, and affordable services will continue to grow.

One of the most pressing challenges facing hospitals and health systems are patients seeking unnecessary emergency department care – called “boarding” – due to a lack of a viable alternative for appropriate treatment. A recent MHA member survey shows mental health incidents are the leading reason for delayed discharge from the hospital. Many of these patients, including children, are not able to access the mental health services they need and deserve due to the limited capacity of mental health providers and facilities in our state.. SF 4664 would ensure funding for systems that support youth with complex needs who need to transition to more appropriate levels of care.

In addition to the provisions included in SF 4664, MHA continues to stress the importance of increasing reimbursement rates for mental health services. Medical Assistance provides reimbursement well below the cost of care, and mental health services are paid much lower rates than physical health services. Higher reimbursement rates, as included in SF 5084 (Wiklund), would help grow the mental health workforce and improve access to these essential services across the state.

Patients and their families simply cannot wait another year for a solution to the urgent children's mental health crisis. We urge this Committee and the full legislature to take action to ensure access to mental health services for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

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