

# Fairview

February 26, 2025

Senate Health and Human Services Finance Committee

Re: Support for SF1561 and SF1402 – Investments in Mental Health

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

On behalf of Fairview Health Services (“Fairview”), we are writing in support of SF1561 and SF1402, both of which make critical investments in our mental and behavioral health systems. These bills represent a critical step to helping improve access to mental health services across Minnesota.

In recent years, Fairview has taken bold steps toward innovative solutions to delivering mental health services. We were first adopters of the EmPATH (Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment and Healing) model in Minnesota and have paved the way for other hospitals in the state and across the country to look to this model to increase access to mental health care. Unfortunately, innovations like these are not sustainable nor replicable long-term at the current reimbursement rates for mental health.

Medicaid rates for mental health services are paid well below the cost of providing care. Financial challenges are particularly pronounced in the inpatient settings with patient’s length of stays increasing and hospitals inability to place many civilly committed patients in the state’s direct care and treatment facilities. Low reimbursement rates discourage investments in and expansions on inpatient mental health services, even threatening existing capacity.

These challenges also show up directly in our emergency departments. The lack of access to outpatient mental and behavioral health services means emergency departments have become de facto holding spaces for behavioral and mental health patients, straining emergency health care resources and creating an unsuitable environment for individuals in crisis who may require specialized care and a calm setting. Delayed admission to inpatient facilities or discharge to community settings often leads to the deterioration of mental health conditions, making the eventual treatment more challenging and potentially less effective. Without a significant investment in our mental and behavioral health system, individuals in crisis will be unable to access timely and appropriate treatment. This shortage is particularly acute in rural areas, where mental health services are already limited.

On behalf of all the patients who entrust our providers with their care, we again ask for your support to make significant investments in our mental and behavioral health system in the current legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Beamish", with a stylized, cursive script.

Chris Beamish, MHA, MSW

Fairview Health Services, Interim Service Line Director, Mental Health and Addiction Services