



February 24, 2025

Senator Melissa Wiklund
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF1561- Grant programs establishment for various purposes related to children's mental health

Senator Wiklund and members of the committee,

On behalf of Allina Health, I am writing to express support for SF1561, which would establish grant programs, modify rates for children's mental health services, and establish a working group and transition team to address boarding challenges related to children's mental health.

Allina Health, a fully integrated health system, is one of Minnesota's largest providers of mental health services with 11 hospital campuses, 65 primary care clinics, and 14 urgent care centers across the Twin Cities, central and southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. We provide robust, patient-centered mental health services across the entire continuum and serve patients at every stage of life—from child and adolescent to geriatric. Each year, Allina Health's mental health and addiction program cares for over 100,000 patients statewide through inpatient programs, outpatient services in ambulatory care, adult day treatment, and adolescent partial-hospital treatment.

Allina Health continues to experience the impacts of adolescents boarding in our emergency departments or other units. In most cases, the hospital is not the appropriate setting for these patients as they do not have an emergent medical or psychiatric condition requiring hospitalization. These adolescents are also disproportionately those who exhibit symptoms of aggression and/or self-harm, as well as those with neurodivergent diagnoses. The lack of access to less intensive care settings often leads patients to the emergency department. For these kids, boarding in a hospital and delaying the appropriate care can lead to further dysregulation and a worsening overall state. It is imperative that legislative action is taken to improve access to the continuum of mental health care for children. The provisions included in SF1561 will help ensure children get the care they need when and *where* they need it.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation. We look forward to continuing to collaborate on this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph R. Clubb".

Joseph R. Clubb
Vice President MHA CSL
Allina Health

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Beth Lardizabal, DO".

Mary Beth Lardizabal, DO
Vice President MHA
Allina Health