



Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota State Senate
February 26, 2025

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs (MACMHP), I am sending this letter to support of **Senate File 1561**.

Children with mental health and related needs are stuck in hospital emergency departments, detention centers and with counties across Minnesota – they are boarding “held for safety and without access to needed treatment” in our safety net systems. The crisis of boarding children is growing – while solutions go untapped. In 2024 Children’s Minnesota reported over 1,200 occasions of a child boarding, a significant increase over 2023 data. A Point In Time survey in June, 2024 of Juvenile Detention Facilities indicated that 20% of children locked in detention were there due to their mental illness. The same Point in Time indicated underutilization of Children’s Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (57% utilization) and Qualified Residential Treatment Facilities (76% utilization) – a lack of staffing prevented children from accessing treatment.

Kids who fall through the cracks into boarding disproportionately are:

- Children who exhibit the symptoms of aggression, self-harm, and running from care
- Older children in their early teen years
- In foster care or are wards of the state and do not have a family advocate
- Have intellectual and developmental disabilities or lower IQ

Children, families and communities bear the consequences – endless media reports and incredible personal accounting has made clear the crisis of boarding and lack of access to needed mental health care is systemic. Positively, solutions are in reach: Leveraging what works we can deliver needed treatment services and support children and families to get better – as they grow, and, for a lifetime.

SF 15161 includes several solutions to address the children’s boarding crisis:

- Leverage Decompression Funding to individualize solutions for children boarding
- Establish the Youth Professional Training System to train and equip the workforce
- Sustain Youth Transition Teams to design services with each child and family
- Grow High-Fidelity Wraparound and natural and family-driven support to gain stability
- Support respite for families
- Improve the PRTF benefit to care

MACMHP thanks the Committee and Legislature for the good work done to start addressing this crisis. We encourage you to continue this work by passing SF 1561.

Sincerely

Jin Lee Palen, Executive Director