

April 9, 2025

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Re: SF2669 - Senate Health and Human Services Committee Omnibus Budget Bill

Dear Chair Wiklund, Senator Utke, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Fairview Health Services, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on SF2669, the 2025 Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus Budget bill. Fairview Health Services is a nonprofit, integrated health system providing exceptional health care across the full spectrum of health care services through our 10 hospitals and 60 clinics. Our broad continuum of care includes academic and community hospitals, primary and specialty care clinics, senior and long-term care facilities, retail and specialty pharmacies, pharmacy benefit management services, rehabilitation centers, counseling and home health care services, and an integrated provider network. Fairview's 34,000+ employees and 5,000+ system-affiliated providers embrace innovation and new thinking to drive a healthier future through healing, discovery, and education.

We have highlighted several items below we are supportive of, many of which will have a direct benefit to the patients we serve and the unique services that Fairview's thousands of employees provide. We have also highlighted a few items that raise some concerns and that we believe could negatively impact our ability to meet the needs of our patients.

**Support**

**Audio only telehealth extension through July 1, 2028** – We support the extension of the audio-only telehealth provisions. We have heard from providers across our system about the importance of telehealth in expanding access to services for patients across our state, especially in Greater Minnesota communities. Telehealth has been particularly critical in expanding access to mental health services.

**Hospital Medicaid Directed Payment Program** - We appreciate the inclusion of the hospitals' Medicaid directed payment program which will help to alleviate the significant underfunding of inpatient and outpatient hospital services in the state's Medicaid program.

**Funding of rate increases for the DHS Outpatient Rate Study** – Increasing rates for both mental health services and physician services rates will have a significant impact in expanding access to community based mental health services.

**Funding for Prepared Meals, Regional Food Banks and Food Shelf Program** – These are critical food insecurity programs. Fairview has partnered with Open Arms of Minnesota through the prepared meals program to provide access to medically-tailored meals for many of our patients who are diabetic and pre-diabetic or pregnant or postpartum. Across our health system, we recognize the important role that access to healthy foods has for our patients and we work to support those needs through our *Food is Medicine* programs.

**Funding for Mental Health Collaboration Hub Pilot Program** - The mental health collaboration hub has been an important tool over the last two years in tackling the challenges with adolescent patients boarding in emergency departments in hospitals across the state. Continued funding to support this program will help to shed light on the barriers that at-risk individuals continue to face in accessing services in the community.

**Funding for “Treat Yourself First” Physician Mental Health Program** – Providers face intense pressures in the delivery of health services due to rising pressures by payers and frustrating delays from prior authorization. We support innovative services for providers to reduce burnout and sustain the workforce.

**Inclusion of Spoken Language Health Care Interpreter Workgroup** - This workgroup will help to address the changing needs in healthcare interpreting. Across Fairview, close to 150 languages are spoken by non-English language preference patients and their families. Access to health care interpreters is critical to ensuring we can meet our patients' needs through accurate, meaningful and effective communication.

**Newborn Screening for Metachromatic Leukodystrophy (“MLD”)** - Including MLD on the list of conditions to be screened for in the MDH newborn screening process is of great benefit. Minnesota has some of the world's leading physicians treating MLD at Masonic Children's Hospital. This is an important first step in helping families access treatments for MLD in a timely manner.

**Funding for the Rare Disease Advisory Council** – The Council is a key partner in helping to advance the treatment of rare diseases in Minnesota and the upper Midwest region. As a Rare Disease Center of Excellence, the M Health Fairview Masonic Children's Hospital and are partners at the University of Minnesota are working to help advance treatments for rare diseases through clinical trials of transformative cell and gene therapies and expand access to these treatments for patients across the state.

**Psychiatric Residential Facility Working Group and funding for Clay County PRTF construction** – This working group and funding for a new PRTF in Clay County are both important steps in continuing to build and expand capacity for pediatric mental health access in community based behavioral health settings.

**Concerns**

**Facility Fee Prohibition** – We continue to have concerns about the proposed prohibition on facility charges for hospital outpatient services. The facility component of a bill reimburses the hospital or health system for the rapidly growing costs associated with vital elements of care delivery -- nursing services, electronic medical records, technology, equipment and other costs associated with access to specialty services – essentially everyone and everything other than the physician services. Prohibiting facility charges would diminish access to cancer and oncology services and pediatric specialty services that we uniquely provide across the Twin Cities.

We are happy to discuss any of these items at greater length and look forward to continuing to work with you and your fellow committee members as this budget progresses over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,



Nate Mussell, Vice President of Public Policy

Fairview Health Services