

April 8, 2025

Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing in support of two provisions in the omnibus budget bill. We want to thank the committee for its inclusion of protected transport. People in a mental health crisis deserve to be transported with dignity and protected transport offers a non-police and non-ambulance response. Protected transport vehicles avoid flashing lights and sirens, but still use a secure car with a crisis intervention trained driver. With the rate increase included in the budget we believe this service will be a great benefit, especially to rural ambulance providers who can better utilize their time responding to other emergencies instead of transporting people, sometimes over quite long distances.

We are also grateful for the extension of voluntary engagement funds from 2026 to 2028. As you know, the request for proposal for engagement services only came out recently. These funds will go a long way to prevent people who may be at a risk of crisis from entering the civil commitment or criminal legal systems, and from needing higher levels of care like hospitalization.

Lastly, we would have preferred to keep the term "mental health practitioner" instead of the proposed change to "behavioral health practitioner." The symptoms of a mental illness are not behaviors. Using the word "behavior" leads people to think that they are behaviors to be changed versus symptoms to be treated.

These two small provisions are important pieces of building our mental health system. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Elliot Butay
Senior Policy Coordinator