



Essentia Health

May 2, 2023

Dear Members of the House and Senate Human Services Conference Committee:

As representatives of the Essentia Health system serving rural Minnesota and leaders of Essentia Health's Opioid Stewardship Program we would like to share our perspective on Minnesota's Opioid Prescribing Improvement Program (OPIP).

Within our system we have seen improvement in clinician prescribing with the interest of the state. Providers at Essentia Health have been receptive to the open transparency of data and the program has helped guide Essentia Health in creating our own internal opioid monitoring program. The OPIP program has been effective in improving providers opioid prescribing and we have found the partnership with the program beneficial.

The collective efforts of health systems, individual clinicians, and state supported programs like OPIP led to a significant reduction in prescription involved overdose deaths in Minnesota. Unfortunately, those trends reversed after 2019 and prescription-involved deaths spiked to historic highs in 2020.

We strongly advocate for opioid prescribing practices that uphold safety and patient-centered care. OPIP collaboratively provides our clinicians with data, up-to-date medical evidence, and peer support to help socialize basic patient-safety practices. The OPIP program works with us, not against us. With the supports OPIP offers, clinicians are empowered to make small, but meaningful interventions to improve their practice. OPIP aligns with our respective opioid stewardship efforts and helps us socialize the importance of clinical practice guidelines and patient-centered care.

Prematurely ending this program hinders our ability to prevent unnecessary patient harms. The devastation caused by opioid use disorder is extensive, visible in our hospitals, clinics, emergency departments, and morgues. We ask the legislature to support OPIP's work in curbing unsafe prescribing habits. Removing these supports at a time when prescription opioid deaths persist is ill-advised.

As leaders on the front lines of the opioid epidemic, we ask for your support of this critical program.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Bianco MD FAAFP | Essentia Health *Ambulatory Opioid Medical Director*
Kelly Black, MA, BS | Essentia Health *Program Manager – Opioid Treatment*

EssentiaHealth.org

We are called to make a healthy difference in people's lives.

Quality | Hospitality | Respect | Joy | Justice | Stewardship | Teamwork